



Allison Grayhurst

The Poetry of Allison Grayhurst

- *completed works from 1988
to 2017 (Volume 1 of 5)*

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Journey of the Awakening
The Longing To Be
Death and other Possibilities

Allison Grayhurst

Edge Unlimited Publishing

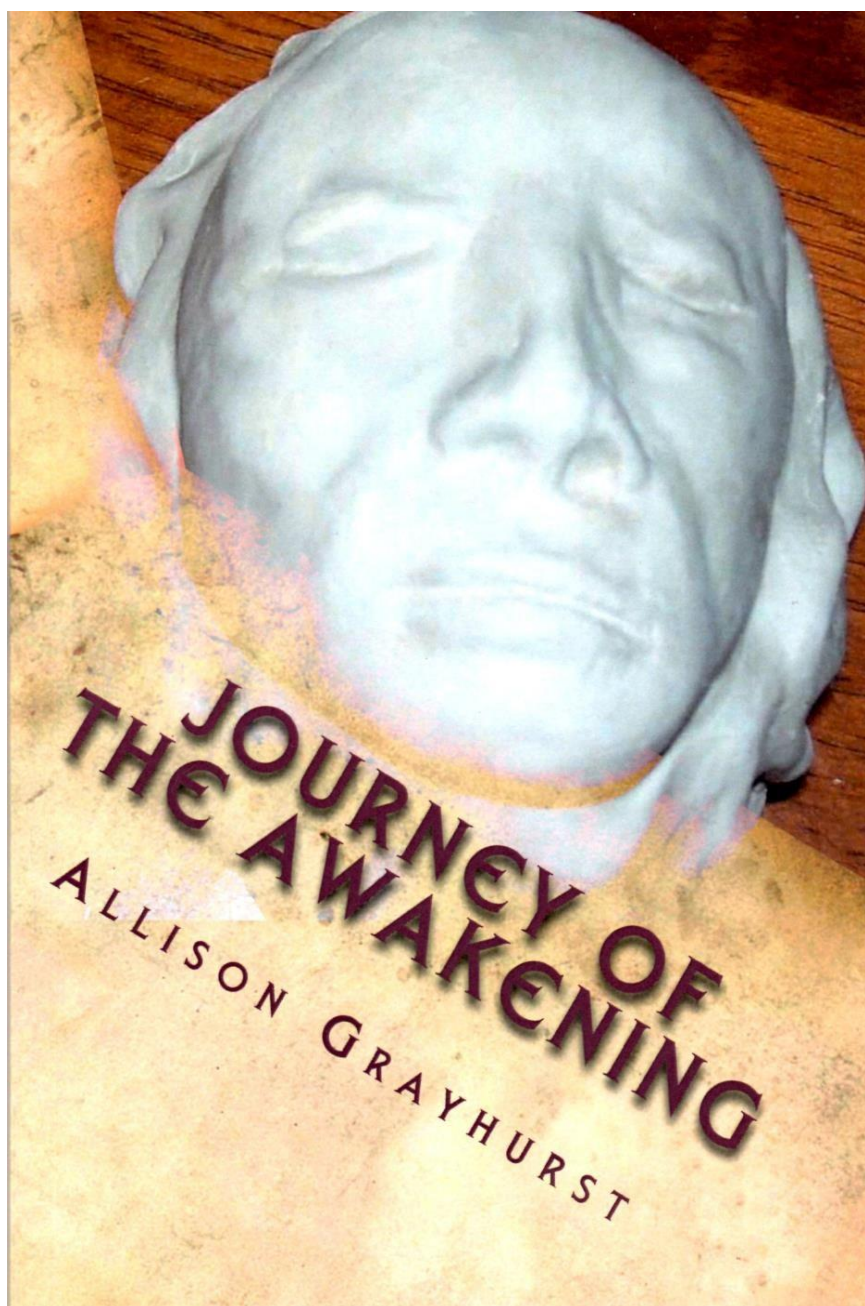
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- completed works from 1988 to 2017 (Volume 1 of 5)
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Journey of the Awakening

Allison Grayhurst

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The Unfolding

When first I cried
unsummoned tears,
stripped of all I owned,
the weather hammered further
into the marrow of my bones,
hammered until each splinter I swallowed
as a plea of hope and on my knees a
grey colour I was fixed.
Bowing like Job without his trust,
defying the ground that sustained me,
the love that soothed me, defying all
but the death and the guillotine mercy.

When second I cried,
I was not born a hero,
but happily released of my load,
I quickened my speed
and latched on to any shore.

When third I cried,
the answer came, giving choice,
demanding my house and rooms of many moods.
It came like a great and potent
ache of awakening, murdering
my self with its beauty.

When fourth I cried
I returned, still the same, but not
the same, having now a foundation
and a summit to guide and to strive
my whole lifetime to attain.

As I Sleep

No sun shone
on Adam's breast
when first his strength
was bled.
When sharp like a lion's tooth
the milk of dreams flowed,
half the sea perished
stale with prehistoric lineage.

And under the rafters where
unborn children wait,
I dreamed of a world
invincible with perfect hunger,
inching out of each curse -
all armour shed.
I dreamed a second life where
tenderness abounded. In every
pyramid, pavilion, parental hand,
the secret light was saved. The ones
who sought did not seek again for
desert and grave were one. And the
salt and bone in each breathing body bent
toward the sun. No angels came, neither did visions
that gave a full understanding.

For what was not accepted or surrendered
was broken, pierced
by a savage love.

Welcome The Death

Welcome the death
of holding death
like a smile. For all
that dreams within,
all that spreads uncorrupted
through the veins, turns its back
on oblivion, knows faith, knows
its destination is beneath the
stars.

Welcome the changing leaves, the
frosted flowers, the vanity of being,
of feeling one Self, whole before
the world.

Welcome the body, the counted pennies,
the child's plight and faces lost
in midnight light, eternally forgotten.

Welcome the one who stands, the one who
praises every cried-out syllable, purges
the soul of stagnant battles, hour upon hour
smells the freshness of renewal in clenched fists
and phones that never ring.

Welcome the sound of a remembered kiss
and the ghosts that grieve forever
beside each mortal heart.

Seizing Time

Legs, thin
and curled
like eyelashes.

Hands, tucked under head,
supporting the weight of so much
lonely thought.

Stomach, a flat curve,
bones and muscles perfectly
ordered.

Sleeping, no one would know
his timeless howl, his long
wait in grief's unrelenting realm,
his requiem fire, or spirit
that outdoes the marvel
of daybreak.

Quiet, he finds
no peace on the pavement of this town,
he holds solitude sacred and feels
each soul's whisper as an unnursable cry.
He breaks all habit with his horn
of piercing mercy.

He, so still, even birds
hold their song to watch
his placid breathing.

Being Followed

The town is dark
with frost & fist.
The moon punishes the streets
with its sultry glare.
She walks down the narrow alley
followed by
a small-eyed stranger:
Large hands in pockets.
Grey hair stinking
with spray. Quick breath
in her lungs. Fear
filtered into her veins.
She looks to the trees for
comfort, looks for the nearest
exit. Does not
turn back. Does not
run, but hears
his heavy steps
stalking from behind.
She begins to pray. But
still the moon's mocking
mask & still the flowers
sleeping & still
his approaching eyes, void.

Young Visionary

Brave before the approaching dawn,
his vision breathed
an easeful flow.

He spoke not of disease consuming
but of terrible extremes and of death's helpful shock
and immediacy.

He cried for love he never touched
and of the aching joy of being and
being tied to this Earth, beyond
generation, beyond heritage.

He wrote with a rich anger,
agonizing over such a demanding
muse, condemned to be short-lived.

He pulsed with adolescent frenzy, free
from too much experience, pure with
a deep madness, cooling his heart
with each desperate release.

Liquid Grey

These shapes I lose
like the hum of breath, lose
in a room like this
that breeds dumb despair.
I cry not knowing what
such grief dominates, feeling
the gully deepening, crossing
beyond all sensation of the sun.
I am what I cannot tell, am
drinking in this mild death,
discordant as a scream or dream.
I dream in shadows. I work within the zodiac spheres.
I see beyond but cannot kill
my fate nor offer a crumb
of kindness
to my enemy's mouth.

Thieves Of Muse

I hope my star does not
shift from Earth and sight,
into galaxies unbridled by
God. And that my vision has
hair and pulse, enough
to reach the primal light, grow
a new strength with each
passing defeat.

*In hours of climbing the worn pillars of love, as death
forces on through sleep, futility & tears, and climbing,
climbing to no avail, to see no sun, feel only the cold
shattering of heartbreak and the mind undoing . . .*

Through That Day

Through that day of yesterday
one full sun ago, together, their
spirits fed, walking as lovers past
familiar streets.

Warm smell of intimacy flowing between two
like nectar to the thirsting throat. Warm feel
of smiles like there was the first time they ever met
and met like a finding of home.

Warm grace in their voices, warm fear
in their laughter, warm
like a justborn child.

There when walking their depths
merged in an uncompromising blessing -

the chaos of confusion
removed
from their astonished eyes.

This Is Not To Suffer

**the thinning years of a lifespan
roped by bitter nightfall**

**the volt of mourning that
mourns the range of ambition to success**

**the blind rodent that frees
itself of self-preservation**

**the hard days of unknowing that
last beyond the taking of bread**

**and the meadow that aches of
aloneness, aches to drive a soul inward.**

This is not to suffer,

**the long giving of love
that receives none in return.**

On Tour

Pale as the Eastern gulls sitting on rooftops,

he speeds over the wide country.

He hurts with uncommon intensity -
liberation balanced between his two lips.

Like the slow hum of rain, I hear him
treading the snowed-in cities, hear his kiss
like a prayer of protection, flowering.

Freedom stitched to his smile,
he crosses the sea he's never seen before,
as he carries his guitar
like a lover's warm hand.

Adrift

Stripped of temper
and the tossing blue.
The sky weighs on me like a globe.
Beginning in the curve of my tongue, I hide
my sorrow like an eel.
I dive past daybreak
into the ditch of midnight.
Guilt is my patched umbrella.
I am only a few feet from home -
a penny in my pocket, a chain
I cannot lose. I want to learn
of pastures where the dying are saved
by prayer, where each captive beast
is released and love is not compared.
Reptiles in the morning clouds.
A snake around a leaf.
I hope to build a boat for patience.
Clinging to a fragment of a tree
I count each schoolless fish,
and tilt against the tide.

Truth To Be Told

With this weight
clinging to my laughter,
cold weight of you
and your indifferent love,
shadows drag by my side
draining my spine of its thick marrow.

And you, on the phone, with neither
peace nor passion in your voice,
may as well tell me
you are regretting the days
once with me, have decided
to remain newborn on the crust
of some exclusive adventure, in foreign
cities, on unexpected streets, stay,
swimming in immediacy where the miracles
are yours alone to claim and keep
and the remembrance of my smile
has no effect.

Not Enough

Here

is how it feels to be toyed with when
hungry, to be taken when
in love, to be sent back when
needing so much just to find a window to
leap through, something to make
my hands tight with conviction, to be
overweight with passion.

Here

is how cruel your slick indifference is,
decaying my devotion for higher places,
taking the syrup from my smile, and the
crippled sun it brings.

Here

afraid, deep in the sinister void,
deep in Monday night, deep in the
left-over memories.

Here

down like a coffin weight, down
into indulgent depths, down
into the thickening ache, determined still
yet to rise . . .

Desire

does not come
like tolerance, learned,
worked for. Withstanding
cruelty, dry lips,
wild pain, it grows larger
than love and God and grows
until all gestures reveal it.

Secretly in the shade of devotion,
it rages. Crouching behind churches and
stairwells, it tongues its drug sweeter
than touch. Burns the stomach, starves
the heart of faithful riches.

When it comes it has no error
nor the unanchored presence
of doubt.

When it comes, it comes riding,
circling like nightfall
the soul's great yolk.

For Waldo

Am I to speak of the hangnail pain,
though no season was lost and there
are no backstairs to climb?

Am I to miss you in the garden
we never had, in the memories
of never being close but always
being near?

And the time you ran frightened of me
through the alleyways, as though we never loved,
never knew the trust of wounds
we helped each other heal. Never you
wanting more than to maintain
your dignity, your freedom, your
contemplative stare. Never you
giving more than the most
of your compassion, the gentle restraint
of your excited spirit.

And to die like that,
killing the final cord. Stinging slowly, so slow
it's hard to cry, to not wish one last swim with you
under the full moon just staring
forever into that small-town sky.

When Worlds Collapse

Falling into places, into
mazes of loud but hidden
hopes, where none but the
stars can interpret.

Falling without instrument,
turning a common colour.

Falling into wounds
that cannot grow wings or
struggle toward the sun.

Falling, finding
these places, no places to name with
the tongue.

Falling, praising
every prison I pass, every touch
of newness in the flame of falling.

in the oblivion of falling.
in the birth of falling,

falling, for once, upright,
absent of fear.

Oldest of Wars Between All Lonely Breasts

Underneath, with a bolt of egotistic rage,
it comes, building shrines in my dark pockets.

And when my heart is weak,
it lures me into its dismal hovel
as if to comfort
with its corrupt tongue.

Pale as the snows, it is without fire,
sapping my juices impotent.

Jealous, it wraps
its leprous paws around
my core, hungering
for obedience.

Robe of awful night, it writhes,
clinging to my skin.

I am burnt by the terror of doubt and
indignant madness
that rents me out to the lust of despair.

I hear the moans of angels, but they are helpless
to intervene, tied to the law of reach-and-reach-back.
Panting now, I try to embrace this beast in play,
uproot its fangs, tame its sly strength. But there are
two atmospheres clashing within, raging to win
side by side - raging to smother my struggle
with one abiding victory.

Placeless

**You are far, without a face.
Six nights on the bed beside
your brooding limbs, the covers
piled between us like a clotted vein.
I know you are sad, but it is never
enough just to say it,
to feel my arms full of your aching,
feel the fine fibres of isolation
choke your core until only the cramp remains.**

And the longing in your eyes knows no bounds.

Beach

Foreign,
at the bottom of an agony
to relish the sweet and wonderful
Earth, to see the painted
complexion of a twilight sky, smile
at the coming current of darkness,
holding out two arms to receive:

As I walk the pale pink sands, watching
the splendour of colours
transform and surround, the moon
gives out a breath and

is born.

Beggar Island

Long this beggar island
where the sky above starves
for praise and the nerves
of all breathing things
are ill with restlessness.

Long this beggar island
where mauled flowers suffer
on porches bare of rocking chairs
and wondrous eyes.

Long like a day alone is long,
like the waiting for a lover's call,
or a good change or summer.

Long this beggar island
where voices behind curtains,
behind sadistic sarcasm,
call the innocent to supper
to harm what once was free.

Long this beggar island
where no covenant is kept
and all and all walk on,
unconsciously yearning for death or
for home.

Shyla

The green dust of your eyes,
the cameo coat of your
body sleeping like
a chinaglass doll, still
by the window's light.

The years and thoughts I cannot
exchange with you nor hope
to savour a single shared
laughter, but between
these broken walls, under the hand
of my affection
your warm head
moves like a small star,
gracing.

Bless The Fallen

**Bless the fallen, the less than ghost faces
that haunt this cityscape.**

**Bless the one who cannot give, who cannot
nurse a broken heart.**

**Bless the one hardened by degrees, by small failures
that mount a life incapable.**

**Bless the proud bearer of truth who cannot be humbled,
blinded by spiritual vanity.**

**Bless the arrogant, the one who feels movement
only by force.**

**Bless the bearer of bitterness, who has no stronghold
but hate.**

**Bless the one who fails to see the birds fly, hear
the angels in their dreams.**

**Forgive us our canyons where self-pity reigns
and self-pity devours.**

**Hold us near the harbour light though the chaos of sea
be the only realm
we, as of yet, have known.**

Dreams Renounced

**With the woods and the sea and
the children that light the path
what need we of words? What
antidote could we stomach
to join our hearts as they
rock side by side?**

**In this used-up city
of hot suffering and plucked bones,
where do we announce our vanished
devotion, to whom can we cry the
loss of moonlight and hope?**

**We sleep without the warm touch
of need. We sleep like mountains,
secret, each
onto our own.**

Missing You

So intolerable is the fierce drain
of having you but
not having you
by my side.

So hard to talk
on the phone of missing you
while the universe lies veiled and vaulted
from my sight.

While you laugh and sing
and I sleepwalk in the sun;

voice, unable to chime; voice
that leaps then fails, calls
to you then crumbles like some
useless gesture; voice,
full of the fury of assassins, soft
like a slug's boneless belly cries
to you of the loneliness
and of the need; voice
that needs your uncompromising devotion,
but gets mute and lost, then sees
that such a thirst
is fatal.

So Much Glory Stillborn

**There was you
holding tight to your need, full
of the killing night.**

**There was you and no one
exceeded you in your terrible love
and in your milking**

**of quiet rains, as in my arms your size
dominated the sun and awoke my wings
to fan and flourish.**

**But long before the sterile sleep of years
showered by compromise, long before the tossing
from side to side, afraid**

**of kissing and the commitment it may bring.
Long before now, falling prey
to this angry hunger**

**that drums an inevitable goodbye
and crushes cruel like cruel will never
crush again.**

Bonded

Notes stream over their bodies
like spilt wine,
dizzy with forgetfulness
and engulfed by devotion's
desiring arms, they quench
their love in these realms
of trembling communion.

They do not lean their heads
on ground of finite meaning but
transported to a common passion
they stare at the wonderful eyes of
the moon and roll like the sea's emotion,
bodies gripped by one hawk intent, hearts
undiluted by distraction, joined forever
in dance or defeat.

Bed Fellow

Night freezes like wet hair to the skull,
signifies a choir of cries
dragged into the dark wind by the masses of
dying. And dying like a father eventually
dies to his child's need for
mercy, like a mouse dies
being blindly tossed between feline
fangs, night has no miracles. Has long been
home to nocturnal insects, to open snares and
moods too heavy to comfort. Night is
noose to the broken-down pilgrim,
to the loud dancer who step
by step howls for freedom. Night is the
drunken wood of broken heroes,
the artist's menacing koo-koo koo-koo.
And lo! to feel the mirror in the night
rise before face and eyes, condemning
with its vague outline,
the thinning form of all and every
hope, reality!

Shell of a Serpent

These are great things,
what you take
with your mounting neglect.
They are things cast out
of the 'beautiful', that
dig into polar ice and
fossilize there; numb, cold,
indistinguishable.

And though you feel superior,
inhuman, hovering above
with a face carved
in one constant expression, you yourself
will not give light to the
lonely, will not illuminate
for the sake of another's need.

Your own pain, (*cunning, hunting*) is a
tentacle that quivers cold-blooded
for pity's gullible caress:

You distance your heart from the humble dancers.

It is not like hell

**but like a fathomless void,
hammering wicked
on the civilized heart, emerging
like a great anger out
of each fundamental nerve.**

**It is like failure, like a
cold and ruthless insanity that tugs
aimlessly on the mind's fine fibres.**

**It is like me and I am
prey to the avoided, to the ugly, whirlpool
mouth of isolation, witness to the long
journey through death and need.
I am prey to the contemptuous
dark that gnaws its way under
every freshly formed smile.**

**It is not like innocent pain
but like a tearing or a mutant fear
that piles and piles,
possessing.**

When One Falters

The cold and conquered spheres
of a love once endowed with light,
but ruined by faithlessness,
wedges between winter's strength
and night's repelling dread.

Always him, thirsting for chaos
to consume, treading on atmospheres
immersed in false perfection. Never him
mourning a tender cry, but crying
of vengeful abandonment, spawns his
curse into every nearing hope.

And she, alone, surrendered to the sacrifice,
pursues a new devotion, walks
from his contagious self-contempt,
loving not his potential, but the memory
of his striving heart,
(once fresh with expectation,
now extinguished, turned against itself
like a scorpion cornered).

She alone, accepting the lonely oblivion
of loss, the unquenchable incompleteness, rises
from day to day on mortal ground,
restoring.

Epitaph

Those years of voyaging
too long beneath your axe-shelter
on foreign terrain . . .

Those years of you with
your spiritual arrogance, your perfect face and
careless conceit, all behind me
now like a madness hatched and slaughtered.

Though I try to stand straight on the path
of forgiveness, in memory, I rebleed
my muzzled cry. And anger as deep
as your self-confidence bridles my
heart again in that old ache, that sick
humiliation; your vindictive laughter, your
manipulative smile.

From you, the cut neck, the finger pointing.
From you, something
to recover from.

Two Hundred Years Gone

Lost like some are
that would wish to fly
on mad and terrible dreams.
Lost like those who starve themselves
of sleep, plunge into
the unscouted depths.

Nature's seductive hymn

takes your mind past

the lonely void

to where your signature forms,

and your voice hatches out of spring

like the primrose and the daffodil.

Lost like time is lost
to the very old and very young.
Lost like the original light,
that weaves in the hearts of some
to help the rest of us survive.

If This My Person . . .

**I do not know any more
how to speak of the burning
wires.**

**How to dress
the cramp with
dream.**

**I am simple now, like a shell,
a swallow, a
first-love.**

**I do not walk with an eagle's foot,
do not stir myself naked from
sleep**

into a gallery of torments imagined.

**That is gone like
desire**

**that clings and begs
for miracles, like a boat that
breaks**

**the waters then is broken
by a great
Tide . . .**

With These Things

With these things absent of flame, lovers
deny the vibrant depths of twilight,
the beauty of a bucking mare in the wet grasses
of autumn and a gallery of possibilities
to shower their skins.

With these things of surface-hold, these things
cured by sleep and time that steals the shock
but never fully heals, lovers
lose the meaning of their merging, the touch
of each other's tongue that touches
like a smooth horn and stings
with unimaginable tenderness.

With these things gone like things go that
no sorrow can express, lovers
grow weak from humiliation, grow
devoted to abstraction, armoured
by resentment, callous
as a jewel.

But with these things of horror of hatching
a new self inside a familiar world, lovers
learn to fly despite the lovers' legends and
the arsenic.

When We Spoke Again

Not all these things were destroyed
though the expensive pain was made solid.

Not all these times are forsaken
even though the trees sway and strike
and the days are often cruel.

Something starved of understanding
is furnished by faith, comes back to bubble
in the eye like a slow and easy smile.

Now I speak at this table
like none of the suffering did me
damage, like I am plucked

from the poor dark, remembering,
all those dreams were showered
by perfect rain.

After Rejection . . . (if only)

**To blaze forth the anger of doubt, grieve
my breast robbed of joy.**

**To drink the stream from furious eyes,
and clip the proud anguish from my tight jaw.**

**To send flying the irrational gestures
that dig like a cat's claw into
my naked lips, withering my depths
of all understanding.**

To know a faith so whole it hurts like love.

**To plunge into the androgynous heart that
sings & hurts the same
for all.**

To Die For The Heart's Illusions

**She is your halo, angel
that plagues you with her light,
slashes your self-defeat
with her wooing purity.**

**She gives you great meaning
to go on. A perfect child-god,
untouchable like an abyss: blue eyes,
sun-toned hair, like you in her
reflection.**

**She is delicate, holy, in need
of your protection. Daughter that swells
your cup overflowing with messianic intent.**

**But little girl, human
with her own flaws, that
you will never acknowledge, never
relinquish your idolizing love. . .**

**. . . from the cold claim of isolation,
where your raving dragons howl
as you drink her smile
like a remedy . . .**

Dancers

He dressed her with forgiveness
 in the gold shadows
 of passion
seeking death, seeking the
 swelling heart
of God. Under
 the weight of his wings, into some
starless summit they rose, clasping
 limbs with alien abandon. Each rich
 with superstition, as in the forest
 terror
poured from the tip of each tree,
 from the tongues of black bears and insects
 crawling.
They held, waiting for too bright
 a birth between them, waiting for the
 magic to merge
their pain into one great beginning.
 Like the thighs of angels in flight,
 their thighs
cut the warring air and smashed against the sky
 into gales of
colour, into streams
 of happy endings as they
dropped like a flood
 at the feet
of death, and love
 began to weave
under
 their astounded skins.

You came to me

**through the hard jaw of the world,
anguished, under the weight of bad habits,
your happiness fading like
your fate, into a fine line running out.**

**You came, prowling the landscape, out of
some gripping past, eyes driven deep by
loneliness.**

**You came, dressed in feline black, carrying
the weight of a shattered city
in your arms, and your blood was cold
with howling.**

**From the snows, finding me with a glance, you came
like spring in my nostrils
and cried & cried as you came
plummeting down, lost from some angel's
symbolic grasp.**

If You Wait . . .

**When he comes
he will be wearing rings of endless
symbol. He will be like a wave,
strong, flexible, seeking shore.
You will know him by his smell
and the way his voice sounds in the rain.
He will lie beside you like a childhood friend,
abandoned to breath and peace
beyond measure.
Rich with depth and kindness,
he will cradle your head on his chest
and you will bless the wound that almost
killed, then brought you near
his familiar blood.**

Blood-red Symphony

**Down the sickly throat
of this sadness bloomed,
no love can reach
 (The petals are charred.
 My mind, locked in patterns,
 rebels against freedom)
From this spill of stability,
this testimonial defeat,
the colours break from
sunset to void and
the world outside
turns menacing
with indifferent shadows, with creatures
without breakthrough, animated
silhouettes that know no suffering or simple
passion.**

I Lived an Error

**in smoke, in a station
amidst
the clouds.
I rolled through
phantom pits,
finding fondness in each
fathomless descent.
With thick confusion
my mortality was stained.
I was taken past
my generationstalking
God
in every science and witch-craft cure,
takenpast the face
of condemning visions. Taken
like a lingering
pain, pulling me through,
tearing with terrible force
the sickness
from my soul, and yet
as tender as a riverwave
in gentle flow, guiding me
onward**

This Love We Hold

**This was the endurance sought,
moving without sorrow away from
spear and shield, loving again
chained to the most-impossible-dream
and yet surviving unveiled,
with each envy rectified, removed.**

**Happy are the flowers that pierce
with swift vibrancy the
down-trodden eye. Happy are the flowers
that briefly shine then suddenly collapse
without sacrifice or a moan.**

**Never did I hope to own a stone
so cold, spread across my flesh
like a darkened shell. Never did I know
a void so dull and so insatiable.
Never ascending like I ascend now in a gathering
of clouds that eclipse the birds and mirror
on the lake so grey.**

**I went walking and knelt before the trees.
Wise days of youth and fresh love that
made us bare of questions, made us sick
from such intensity. I held your presence
in my breath and breathed my spirit
free. Freed from phantoms awakened,
freed from the pendulum tide.
Free to outspoke the wind
and ride beyond the parasite of time,
beside you and sustaining
forevermore.**

I Dream This Shelter, This Precipice

**Your rare and bare natural tongue
and your unfathomable kisses, distinct
like the sun, that dwell without limits
on my lips.**

**The torrents of your quick pulse and your
slow release, overfill my chasm, brings warmth
where warmth is no longer felt, only
the driving nail of locked souls - yours and mine
and all things sacred, accumulated like this
in the wild deep.**

Country Ride

Long fingers like ribs
stroke the sky in mortal shades.

Time, watching trees
planted in fields,
so alone and tied
to all eternity.

Time, seeing the liquid
eyes of cows, and horses
without a tribe, drifting
from grass strand to strand.

And again, the treetops like
sackcloths of autumn orange and red,
take all attention
from the barns.

Dogs in the distance run
feverish
and free.

Unmasking the Bone

The suffering released
you of certainty,
made you mourn your innocence.

A brutal burn that crying could not erase.

His hand reaching out to yours,
never changing in its irrational cruelty.

And faith - it commands you to follow. Compels
you to let go, leap into the lungs
of a new god, a god
that makes one thing real
and takes all else in return.

You sit by rivers watching, trust only
hooks and horns for a time.

For a time the horror stalks you,
he follows your step
over landscapes and continents,
calls you every night
with a new shock to harbour.

You say it is a canyon he has cut, full
of dry thorns where no thirst is eased.

But what is the refuge wished for?
Is freedom too impossible
a word to use?

And what of him with his
opalescent depths and
offensive truths?

What of you, who labours for a desireless love,
striving?

Have Faith In The Fall

Your tide
lets loose the havoc
of untamed emotions.

Your young smile,
your eyes watch
every novelty with untainted desire.

You sleep
with your warm-womb remembrances, remembering
each day spent trusting, beyond innocence
and encroaching adulthood.

You fear a climbing intent,
the discovery of
a shared room cold with hate.

You enter
the boiling light
with no hand to hold.

You, and those years
cutting like an eclipse
the wild purity of your extreme heart.

You, and loving you
as you walk today, in the clutches
of this harrowing lesson.

In a Room With Somebodies

**Your chains fall loose, you lose
the weight of
being.
Proud, nervous, drenched in
mysterious dependency,
you hold
your cup of coffee, unable to make
conversation. Surgically removed
from the crowd, your smile
fades like a snapped tail,
travels into the pit
of your waters, into
the climate of your rolling, twisting
depths. Waves
that beckon your emotions to chime,
rush from belly
into hands and eyes, rush
into the choking
air. You,
restless from living too long
beyond
the skin, hold tight
your alien love, hold in
the cries of your forming compassion and long
for exit.**

To Walk Without Shape or Sound

That I cling to this cold sleep,
show little effort to be removed . . .

In nightmares of symbols grey and mortal,
fears translate all my hope
into an impatient temper, and I stand,
arms folded, with threatening glances
turned toward the window.

That I will not move from this unhappy
bondage, give the world the wave it deserves and
rejoice, full force in my non-belonging . . .

That I lay with false sorrow, my numbing wounds
displayed like so many movies, consuming
all thought and vision . . .

Drowning in unutterable loneliness, I
cannot pray this bad taste off my tongue,
cannot claim my home inside the lightning jaws.

I have seen the light abandoned for the hangnail's
torment. I have seen this darkness, dug my head deep
in its flaming mud.

But this is nowhere:

There is only
the circle, the spiral journey
up
only to be like the animals and angels,
uncommitted
to the weather's foothold.

He of Fear and Hunger

**He, held hostage by the world's blade,
took his lovers with impersonal want.**

**He, never seizing with strength
his orphaned heart, but building
a fear of dependency, let harden
the soft bones of his under-wrists
and left each emptiness he found
unanswered.**

**He, abandoned to be ruled by rigid souls,
wandered under the atonement of many dawns,
refusing any shelter, refusing
to shoulder the burden
of his blood.**

**He, with his groin of aching suckle,
risked love to save his dignity.**

**He, of wilderness doom and burn
was solitary as a long-sitting
stone.**

Thin Rope To Hold

**Drum hard on the wound
entangled in my eyes.**

**Drum me a backroad
to forgiveness.**

**And the venom of revenge,
drum that out too until its murdering addiction
lies down.**

**I wait beside these deadly
roots - these are my nerves
clogged with insecurities.
How sharp this shrill in my heart
that never catches fire!**

**Drum free my harvest
then show me the language
of weeds.**

I Watch My Shelter Fall

**I swim, revolve like a planet
through the cosmic black, around
a sun of infinite heat, bruising
space as I go with my presence.**

**Non-stop battle of my spirit lusting
for flight while my body's on ground, growing
mad with the weight of habit.**

**I need to feel the sky splitting
from my voice, to have the courage
to construct something enduring, a love
enduring.**

**I am full of a future unborn, full of the terror
of awakening.**

**I am leaving my heritage behind.
I am lifeless now as any
broken twig.**

No Telling

Taking back
the soft mood
the cockfight fire

I shrink from happiness as I do from horror,
while still craving the intensity of extremes.
There is no witchcraft cure, no person
unchanged by the constellations.

Taking back
the long-held hurt
the herd dream
and the tender gesture
Taking back the tyrannizing void
the genius ache
and the doldrum eve

There is no faith that can be won by force
and no telling what
my heart is willing to die for,
transcending.

In Some Uncertain Future

**I will sing again
of love that has found its verb and swell
and the avalanche of summer clouds will
consume me in their infinite shapes.**

**I will cry again
the beautiful cry for the marriage of
heart and soul that must separate to
know each concealed fault.**

**I will know again
my soul split from shock,
the mind's tumbleweed and the choirs of
starlings beneath the overpass, baying
into endless sundown.**

**I will feel again
that I am sinking like a snagged bird
from the sky of my belonging, feel the
things of guilty souls and how the night
can rid a heart of wonder.**

**I will see again
a tribe of dark horses racing
on rooftops, my breast, an ocean of rolling moons
and an indelible smile.**

**I will hold again
a duty of religious flare, a winter
bolted in the void where the snows
begin to fall like cut daises.**

As Far As This Light

**To be at the point of breaking, always
but never torn.**

**A season that fills my skull, steals
embraces from my arms.**

**All is new like the first
fire touched,
like the squirrel and the centipede
witnessed for the first time
as pure presence.**

**Such clarity I cannot cloud with
distraction, cannot thin
the intensity of this load.**

**Relentless challenge
that finds me, bends me, wills
my voyage.**

Promise

I let drop a stone
into a pond.
I raise a dead star,
as a promise lies dormant
in the clouds' damp veins.

I will go with my
trembling bones,
trespassing the edge.

For someone waits
behind shackled doors
for me and
my love.

The Foliage of Our Music

Near the shut lives of people
who love intangible,
who hide within the spell of seasonal spirituality,
you are the all that intoxicates my hunger,
summons my vision beyond
its threshold, takes my hand amidst
the tyranny of worldly demands and loves
me through my weeping - your body happy
to receive me, to blanket me with touch. Your hair
and belly and your thin bones
that carry such a restless warmth that
only sharpens each day with charm and insight.
No one desires like you the forgotten passions,
reads to me the marrow from books and dances
with mad laughter when seeing the solemn
horrors of most daily deeds.
No one grows so weighted with sorrow,
so beautified by empathy as you when tracing
the footsteps of the oppressed, visiting
each broken with a dense compassion
that embraces all as your equal.

Haggard hope between us
to avenge the space that splits
our love with petty differences.

I spend no delight but dread
the thorny flame of loneliness, of
loving again a lesser love, looking
into some appealing eyes that are not
your eyes nor know the things
of your kind wisdom.

Receiving

Though I recognize kin
in a bird's faultless face,
the world is wheel, is cold,

master of my open heart.
And out on the streets, away
from embraces, the sun
disturbs in its strength and independence.

People grow old
before my eyes,
stirred by nothing
but further comfort.

Fire cloud above - it is
this hunger, this old faith, old
as God. This faith so clean
I may go mad, harder than love
to bear:

Endless cutting down.

Battleground on the Inside

**He takes my feet from the fossil earth,
takes me to where a tribe of insects wait
to wed me with their hive.**

**I join the lunar cold light, harming
nothing, harmed by nothing, but yet my
history engulfs my silent head, speaks of
moments blind with guilt, moments when I
bore inspiration like I bore my breath and I cannot
contain my melting indifference, cannot help
myself to wake from such longing to return
to ground.**

**The sun rolls like a snail through
the mist just beyond the Earth's other side as
I drift in night and circle
the sky's expanses, waiting
for my enemy in his own
dimension.**

Crowned

The large June light
is woven with the clouds
like a wind to steal away all breathing.
And on the moving Earth, lawnmowers
roar and little snails crawl across
the wet pavement.
There are no more dreams, only this
woodchip swallowed and the bright water
cared for.
The fog has shown me my substance.
I eat my plums whole and wish
for my child everything tender and alive.
I feel the breeze through the window, taking
the curves, turning me over like a patch
of rotted grass. I am now beginning to be collected,
to answer to this new name and see my past
through a fearless eye. I feel the kick
of a new vision formed and feel
the gentlest of mercies
roll down my chest like a kitten.
This is lunch, an autumn leaf waxed
and the laundry dried.
Give me birth. My body skips across the edge,
and all good things are finally waking.

Seeking the Balanced Degree

My mind is painted bright blue
like a pair of favourite jeans.
My belly is bread for thieves. Here
the crime awakens:
I drink from the eternal teat
of responsibility, from the lake
of suffering I must ignore
to breathe a steady rain, to scatter
my guilt amongst the weeds.
What happens when your all is nothing?
or when the truck runs you down seeing only
anonymous hairstrands and entrails?
Knowing love's limitations,
like one knows the snows or the teeth
of an animal, is the tension that frees.
An enemy is at my table.
A horse is buried under American sands.
My heart is water:
It longs to quench the hot summer skin of sparrows.

Rain in the morning

Rain in the morning,
grey steel is in the sky,
and in my eyes the colour
shows. The night's fury kept me awake
since 3 am. My troubles are like spiders
that creep and curl along the
ceiling, hovering with the stillness
of death. I must keep going
though my body aches with fever
and my mind is prey to despair. I drink
necessity's authority. To watch a loved-one suffer
is worse than shame, worse than feeling
futility collapse on your throat
or a weapon held at the head.
Rain in the morning. It is a mistake to
hurl the emptiness outward, to pray for the destroyed
or curse the goldfish for their beauty.
But who can give the minerals meaning,
magic to the snail, or purity to the worm?
Rain in the morning.
Little by little the terror rises,
and the world outside remains unchanged.

For This Face Only You Could Alter

**Be for me my mask torn down.
Take from me my old and hatching temper.
Take my wanting, my struggle
to renounce approval.
Be for me the lonely desire, the one
celebrated by each breath.
Take the guilt from my
loins, the hours spent mute,
consumed by fear.
Be for me a living arrow, a communion
of conviction and gentleness.
Take from me my fate, a conditioned future,
an inevitable plan.
Love me though my love
is sensual, thin of voice, of spiritual
decision.**

Love Unknown

I sit inside a tent
needing what I cannot drink.
I grieve the lost passion of my prayers
and the solid breath of death's
all-consuming maw.

Tracing the fantastic light
of giant love that crushes chaos
with each monstrous embrace,
I taste him. I cannot help
feeling his fears like
a hated obstacle, his forehead like
an impassable field, full of his mind's
worst whispers:

I sit within this tent, in a trance-like gloom.
I grieve his love that cannot bend . . .

yet tender still
is his smile.

Christened

Because of you, my blood is nourished.

Just beside one another

in laughter or decay, passing looks

that bid for nothing.

Because of you I am able to blink

where others are blinded:

I bury heartbreak in our kissing.

I Hope Your Dreams Anew

**You drink from the jugular
with uptight gestures and hold
in your eyescorn and condescension.**

**On your political altar your feeble gods
sit, dreaming of fame from your tongue.**

**Once rich with a fire catching,
you did with delight the things
of sharing.
You made with your hands a prelude
to magic.**

**But what mercy was crushed by
your self-assured ways? What tolerance was
stifled by your righteous crown?**

**I cannot be, I cannot envy
the yellow death surrounding,
nor hate the stain of your pride.**

**But be that blue whisper that echoes
through each moan and laughter
of immortal needs.
But be that stone that makes
an arrogant person fall,
withdraw into a deeper understanding,**

be it there for you, somewhere, overwhelming . . .

This Wound, This Reminder

**Here what once was heavy is now like a
hollow seed resting on the inside**

everlasting.

**Here what has been dead but does not die
gains not growth nor speed and has long ago**

ceased

**to bleed but remains a part of
for now and for all futures to**

carry

**and to help set the truest faith
breathing and free.**

Because of course

you will go with summer
never knowing a remedy.
You will go beyond where you go
around the ninth and final life, ducking
in dark boxes to fade finally alone,
away from instinct and nurturing.
You will go into the natural earth,
and from there, my vision staggers and
cannot name, but caught
on the wind, in sensual shades
of forgiveness mighty & forever,
you will know a place unhindered by death.
You will hear the secret
your pale eyes
have always harboured.

As My Blindness Burns

Without these things
of rainbow and insight
I stand, fragmented
by despair, fleeting as daylight,
composed of failed hopes
and held-back tears.

Young, like truth is
when first found,
are the swollen joys
of new understandings.
And secret still is
the unsculpted future
that rises unexpected without
resolution.

The muses of this universe hold faith
and doubt equally
in their impregnated beams,
and me with my hideous cowardice
that grows stronger with age, hides
the things that challenge
and direct me to an edge, ignoring the
simple surrender needed
to grow and to deeply be
someone.

This city sobs
when hearing its own wind die,
takes in its industrious hands
the sluggish and the bitter.

And the few who rebuke
this smog-breathing serpent
lean depleted in each other's arms,
hoping to embody something beyond
the world or melancholic pain.

And here, wanting, each slave is born, each
mistrust upheld like a perfected attitude.

People hold conviction without vision,
walking the subway floors, staring
out to empty highways.
Stale are the nutrients of each wished-on star.
Stale ambition bleating into
each small ear.

Lament now the corpses in caverns,
in parades and family restaurants.
Lament the eclipsed beauty of impulse,
the restraint of every compelling break-a-way.

For just one hope to tread behind
Jesus' sandal, freeze,
then crack all chains.

I would delight
in the struggles of individuals
conquering the downcast clouds
that hinder and fill a soul
with stagnant woe.

But like I am, sick with human
needs, political and ungenerous, I face
the storms and hide my pleas inside the
thunder.

Naked, lovers divulge
their infinite shades. Lovers
lean like dried up trees against
an autumn's ground, lean
for mercy and for each
affection denied.

But love they do
in the wintry airs
trying to overcome
personality, imbedded habits,
each other's foreign sphere.

I am pale, forgetful,
I lie awake all night taken down,
breathing the vaporous stench of
decay, in nightmares,
while kneeling before
the brightest flower.

I watch you thinning,
keeping
my anguish private,
for none will accept my five open
senses, the reasons for my withered will.

I cannot embrace my interior
with humble affection, but must
know the labyrinth's breathing tide;
mysteries renounced, complexities explained
by pensive reason.

Where I sit, seeking the inaccessible cure,
madness comes to kill through dissection,
definition and spiritual systems decreed.

In water I am numb,
drifting dazed through dark
androgynous waves.

I think of whispering to your waiting grave,
of netting grief and memory,
starving each of their sustenance
blind.

But then alone, in death, in life,
connection is our bread,
our higher air that beckons and repairs
the cracks that would kill on
tougher days.

How long to hold you in this sandpit sinking?
How long to watch your unwilling heart fade?

That I am through with annihilating snares
Through with the brutes of cold consuming despair

Through your life yielding to
sudden disease, through the closed door
that echoes strong sighs like screams
down corridors of love's
last stroke . . .

Longing for netherfields,
I want to run
in these subterranean, primal places, want
limbs of fire, eternally
red and dancing over the waking darkness.
I want to seal you

into the living Divine.

I am suspended, believing
the horror will not come, believing
death will not make
a skeleton out of you.

To Learn the Scarlet Vision

**Where does it go,
the shelter and the death?**

**What does it feed, that old
loathing sterility that laughs at all
creations, masters them into a craft
and calls itself superior?**

**How do we cherish without pride,
be extreme like a Russian prophet,
unguarded in the heat and ice of an
evolving spirituality?**

**How do we love like Jesus, mourn
like Jesus, be brave
against the inevitable and hope
through the sullen days to be
better, more than shadow
or collected habits?**

**How do we let go of what eventually
will be taken away?**

When This We Feel

**Our strength giving away
when love is undermined,
diluted like a ghost is from its human counterpart -
diluted yolk of a backbone
striving.**

**When battling the heat of dullness rising
When battling the waters that cry
for the breath of a sinking dream.**

**And spheres crack wide
laying exposed the true, the awful intent
of footsteps travelled. . .**

They told me of

a Secret colour.

I crossed the ancient hills,

**I bound my foot on heaven's shore,
bewildered at the seas.**

I went down with jealousy's riddled truths.

**I saw what I could not do,
could not cure
my envious heart.**

**But if I was like unfailed purity
with eyes like a child in
the rising morn . . .
And if I was translating prayers,
daughter of
the aspiring dreamers . . .**

**then the milk of my muse
I would be gargling
and bid for wanting
no more.**

Which Way Descending?

Unlike the golden spin of depth's dive,
petty matters wither so soon the singing voice,
cursing a life with
their digging stake . . .

No seed, no gift can flourish
with worry and empty toil.
There exists the thorn, the weight and
the mercy nailed
to every pain like a reminder
to persevere, and still
the small distractions
that scrawl like glass
upon the skull that kill
like a freezing.

Between the quicksand world and
the intangible wonder
all hearts must choose and cannot
straddle . . .

On Foot

I have seen alligators
enchant the innocent
into their swamp parlour.
I have tasted the earth,
transfigured in its nuclear playground.
I have been lifted into a violet sunset,
charred with soul-shattering burns.
I fell into winter's heaviness,
plunged my body into a chilling aqueduct -
stayed, sleeping out the human panic.

Lovely day to be freed of all
attachments: Let the storm revolve
around this abnormal world. Let childhood
serve as a consolation for withdrawing,
aged faces.
In a room a decade passes.
We walk in bewildered, we walk out unchanged.

This way, I move upward - toward blackness,
the edge of eternity.

I take seat beside the paradoxical judge.

I dream, a hundred miles away
from a new beginning.

A World Away

Your nights were cradled
in the boiling anguish
of knowing nothing, not
of your purpose and not
of the tide that brought
you from behind.

Your summers were jaded
by the men who beheld you
as one ripened, but luckily
robbed of suffering, and by the women
who left you, unable to withstand
your scissored breast, and spirit of
stubborn morbidity.

Take the gospel of your blessing
and of your balancing.

Take today what restores
yesterday's hollow ache and cursing.

Take these days in your hands and feast
until every sour doubt dies and

you mourn their passing
no more.

Safe In You

In you, mystery is masked
by no one's hood, has grown
away from the tyranny
of world and the gloom
of nations betrayed by
their gods.

In you the inexplicable
takes a womb, a rhyme
from your sweet blood
flowing.

And love, once pale and clay-like-cold,
selected you to partner my hope,
to resemble visions vacant of sentiment
and teach me to abandon
death and ill-nourished joys.

Your love wraps around like a melody
undulating out from your exceeding
intensity, it wraps,
until I surrender, unable, unwilling
to move.

My colours would be grey

**if not for your heart so
tempered by preserved dreams
and accepted disappointments,
dancing in the unknown,
with a tongue
unafraid to astonish or offend
the public swallower . . .**

**if not for every morning, finding
your eyes closed, sleeping near my
smiling body, and your lips that unearth
each tear from my harbouring breast,
unearth the giant seed of deliverance . . .**

**if not for our partnership,
our home of unhooded tenderness,
the doorways within that lead
to evenings of geranium spring . . .**

**if not for holding you, or
your touch splitting the shell
of my skin, flooding my womb
with fires of indomitable
peace . . .**

Stung

by the sad secret your simple blood
beheld. By the four-winds of colours
that multiplied into your warm and
fanatic fires, into the nudging madness
of your crying sex that landed near no one's
hearth, that landed alone to thirst the stuff of deeper
things and commune with what must forever
remain autonomous.

Dance between the clapping jaws
of vicious desires that want your face as
low as your heart can sink, down to the cold nadir
of self-hatred, where lies and needs are one.

Dance the drowned and crazy dance
before the light was scattered, after
each shelter is destroyed and
you are you - an odyssey of
unweaned creations.

Family

Feeling again
the joy of a matured
and multiplying love.

Seeing the seasons dissolve what was
but never the one thing
that keeps us close.

I lean on you like you do me through
the thick seductive world.

I savour your primitive spark,
your tongue that breeds an original
voice.

We are strong, born
of animal colour and spiritual desire.

And warm like blood
is the shade that stretches true
between us . . .

Journey & Drink

**There I sang and there I knew
my heart in all its wanderings.**

**Night fled from my shoulders,
travelled to where the saddened
watchers waited. It left me in my mousetrap,
chasing phantoms I never spun.**

**And there, the one thing
that was certain was the silence,
the ways of shrouds and sleepers.**

**Sinking from heights into sublime slavery,
I turned my back on choice.**

**I walked with spiders spiderlike, out
from my heavy tomb.**

**But it was not enough, to escape and then to
conform, but to be a brighter thing
than before the years swept my youth asunder.**

**To be where hardness is deserted
for the "yes, yes, I know."**

**And between the extremes, a patient
acceptance and making ready.**

**Yesterday I knew my bread,
I knew of boredom hounding
with full and ruthless speed.**

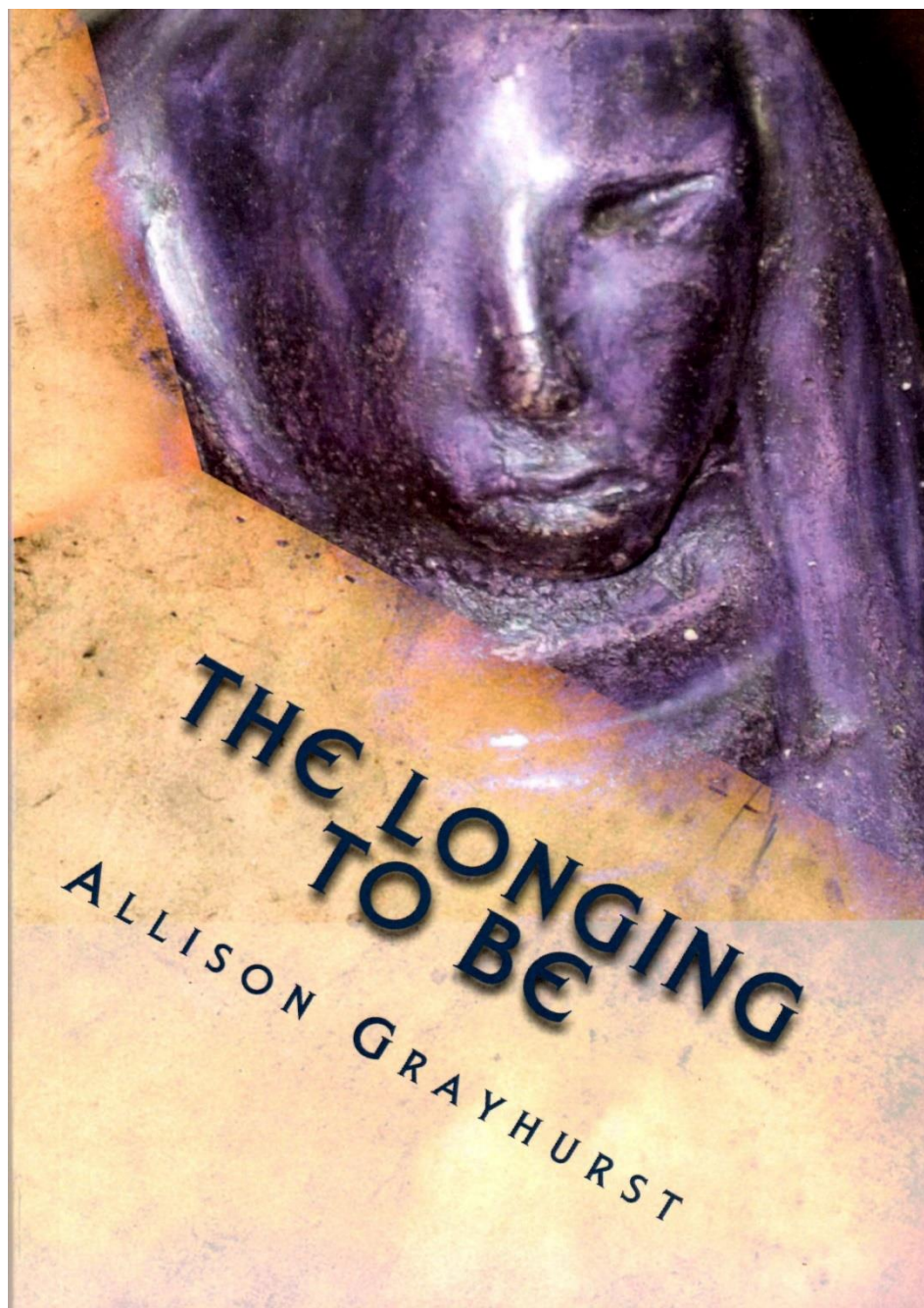
**Today, I swallow
(away from envy and ambition)
holding close
my one and lasting
treasure.**

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Reviews of 'Journey of the Awakening':

"Journey of the Awakening is the first book of poetry that I have read of Allison Grayhurst. While reading it began to sound familiar, the comment to myself was "She is as good as Sylvia Plath". When I finished the book I read comments from others who referred to her as "In the style of Sylvia Plath"; Ms Plath, one of my favorite poets had no match until Ms Grayhurst's work. Congratulations to her on her achievements, I am already a 'fan', the love of her work will continue to grow," *Ann Johnson-Murphree*, poet and author.

"Grayhurst is a great Canadian poet. All of Allison Grayhurst's poetry is original, sometimes startling, and more often than not, powerful. Anyone who loves modern poetry that does not follow the common path will find Grayhurst complex, insightful, and as good a poet as anyone writing in the world today. This, and other Grayhurst poetry volumes are highly, highly recommended," *Tom Davis*, poet, novelist and educator.



The Longing To Be

Allison Grayhurst

Edge Unlimited Publishing

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The Longing to Be

On the dregs of dreams
abandoned, the unfortunate
fall, for reasons that trace
no discernible pattern
but that the sun and stars
are every beings' only known
permanence and even the strongest

have been seen to perish. Beautiful,
carnivorous Earth that holds
the intensity of a tiger, through your
worst crimes forgiven and your greatest acts
of compassion remembered, here like clay
we await your wind to mould
what our own hands cannot control,
to take our will and seal our every desire
with your brown and luscious blood.

These I See

Shape of a dragon
in a cloud of
great grey density.

Dreams of an empty shell
sitting cracked like the earth
after a quake, before the last flesh perishes.

Shape of a leaf blowing past
an old man.

Dreams of the children
who run to catch it.

Shape of a bird
wooing the sun with
a beakful of roses.

Dreams of raised arms,
protesting this
and every gesture.

Shape of a worm
drowning.

Dreams of a human heart
breaking but doing nothing
to save its bloating body,
only eyes that look, look and feel
the sheer mercilessness of time
as its wormish head ceases its struggle, floats
obsolete as though never knowing
of existence.

Crush This Colour

**Crush this colour
of filthy grey that summons
all my parts to follow
into a labyrinth where
birds and beasts never go.**

**Because I am alone in this nadir,
and bitterly red is the hope I hold
to relieve me of this sterile station, crush
my name and when that is done,
my tomb and all its witnesses.**

**Strike this snare with almighty
light, let words and flesh fade until
only the nightmare fire remains
to burn and turn me once again
death-knowing, anew.**

Together Journeying

We lie in a long neck,
 constricting,
in a roach-ridden cell, in the trunks
 of earth-weary trees.

We are like the octopi
 stretching all arms available
but finding only weeds, the droppings
 of guppies and a child's broken bracelet.

The weird breath of birds lights up the sky as we lie
 in the places darkness knows best, as we lie
in a gesture of chaos, biting our shells,
our eucharist hope.

 Wine on our foreheads, thick as whale blubber,
wine like drink to our intelligent kisses. I kiss
my lover floating homebound on black ice,
floating past
 flowershops and hearts of many hues.

My lover lies where I lie in promises
 vague but quenching.

Down the screaming nerve. Through
outside crowds and social duty.

 We do not believe in the contagious code
but in the slug at midnight under the stone,
curled tight against the predator's paw,
in flesh-driven grief, in the bed-pan
 under the invalid,
 and the infant's hanging feet.

We rest in both grey-soiled glue and in sunset haze.
We rest with appetite, beginning.

First Snow of Winter

First snow of winter falling.

The bed is unmade.
Rooftops are beautiful
and white.

Home is a birthday cake,
a painting etched in crimson
light. The cats are intently watching.
The sounds outside are few. One lover
is sleeping, the other breathes in
the wintry view.

Like a cleansing, like an unmarked page
or a slice of Italian bread,
the snows descend, bringing warmth
to the veins, bringing the comfort
of sweaters and knitted socks, bringing
bodies together and the year to an end.

First snow of winter falling
like another chance, like a farewell
to colours fading and flowers on the graves.

First snow of winter arriving,
its tide of working magic
caressing away the rage of the city
with its cold, immaculate embrace.

In His Arms

**In his arms the blind night sees. I see
an eagle's nest, and nocturnal
beasts rejoice. I see a path unbroken
by doubt and windows where moonlight slides in.**

**With all the weeping of disappointments
met and overcome, of drinking bitterness
like sleet and trouble beating vibrant
in moments of silence in dreams of something new,
he lies like a legend fossilized, asleep on his back,
giving worth to the whole of a lifetime's suffering,
worth to this continent of drizzling skies.
And I am lucky, more than fulfilled.**

**In his arms I can hear a prayer echoing
from the branches of trees, I can feel
my despair forgiven, cradled in the flow
of his tenderness.**

Jealousy

The deep yawn of night
follows this. Follows into a strong fire
of orange and blue rhythms
that destroys all but blame. I blame no one
but my heart that twists on
this precipice. I have chosen
this intractable devotion for you -
you who can take the gravity from my walk,
leave me a fugitive, limping
for unholy escape.

What follows this is the street
at three in the morning, starved of children,
agitated and cruel.

What follows this is nothing
I can cope with, is my imagination
bent on the morbid decay of love,
is my faith underfoot
and you as someone other
who would steal the lyric and bone
from our good tomorrow.

With arms stretched,

**hands clasped
toward the sky, faith has entered his cold eyes
like a dog dying, losing its connection.**

**Facing the guilt of a thousand sinners, he feels
the cracking of his heart, leans on the shoulder of his
hardest enemy and longest friend, touching
his dead lover as though death were a good thing,
a place of unearthly hope.**

**He has made up his mind to let the axe fall
and let his guilt be finally buried
along with the light he sought to master.
He asks his friend to do the deed, to free him
like her who surrendered to spiritual trust.**

**And his black coat falls, his pale complexion
is beautiful, flushed on such a threshold.
He bows his head, waiting like one
whose purity has been restored, waiting
with brave anticipation.**

In The Days

In the days of Weatherspoon
and Enos, the spring arrived
like the drumbeat of an enemy tribe.
In the temples little birds died,
sacrificed like a good tasting brew
for the sake of the whole.
Lovers wept upon their own finished graves
and children played only when they were told.
Grandparents turned their backs on their kin
and marigolds died before their colour set in.

In the hours of everafter, when cats and dogs
were sold as beef, and all the leaders prided
themselves on the accomplishment of peace,
people took showers three times a day and
counted their money like virtues. Depth was
crushed by medicine. Brothers and sisters shared
no childhood secrets they wouldn't disclose. Volumes
of books rested on the public shelf of mystery stories
and "How To Better Yourself"s.

In the minutes before our doom,
righteousness glowed in florescent
orange and blue on the political dreams
of the go-with-the-flow many and the radical few.
Women danced in leather on the streets
as strobe lights flashed the desperation
in their eyes, for those who could, to see.
Men marched like in the years of war
side by side in white T-shirts and blue jeans
looking out for prey, for any non-conformer
to come their way.

In the time of now
crosses are fashionable
and people are only frightened of what
the impossible may bring. There is a donation
in every can and tyrants walk with wide, toothy smiles
shaking everybody's hand. Beggars collapse
in hoards on the streets, and even the best of them
shake the dust off their feet, hardened like Cain,
by whispers of self-preservation and futility.

Swim

He sinks into the river
tossing his garments on the muddy shore.
He takes the river-water into his mouth,
pressing her sturdy thigh in his mind.
And in his movements he waits for her,
smells her in the rocks and in the geese
passing overhead.
He lifted her from her burden, promised
a garden and other two-some things.
He spoke of stories until she found her heritage.
He treads the river's current, keeps his eyes open
underwater to see the weeds and fish beneath
its greying surface.
She told him of her duty and how love is
for another place. She looked straight ahead,
as if their hands clasping was a weakness
better to forget.
He gathers his breath and dives
into the rapids like one fierce, in flight, one
who has left his peace forever behind.

He is

Filled with a something
that lifts his heavy chin.

Filled with the silence of woods,
with a perpetual moon in a perpetual
night, with the bones of small creatures
and other luckless prey.

Born of strong sorrow, stronger than pride
or a mouth open for song, he is
my lover rocking in the shade, he is
a forward marching on yellow autumn grass,
he is flying over stones and fog, over
the sigh of doom, falling into a gracious depth.

He is looking where the light never goes, into
the eyes of a subliminal cry.

He is a quick moving cat moving across a
barn's black roof. He is my umbrella,
my need and my deliverance.

Once

alone
where the deep star
failed to glow
I saw your heart come crawling
out of its obsessive shell,
crawl to where all shapes sing
of passion and mercy
side by side.

I saw your hard seed grow kind,
losing none of its brutal drive, but
gaining a natural beginning - grow in a soil of sensual
joy and a wild aching desire to be more
than nerves and need.

I saw your hands like waves arriving
to the final surrender of shore.

I saw you as stone, draped
in the mysteries of primal truths -
your head bowed in gentle fury, a figure
of unwavering embrace.

The Stone-frame

The stone-frame sings
my threshold, sings my
heart's futility. It is
so hard a cage it makes
my knuckles crack, it breaks
my bones from too much leaping.
The stone-frame wishes to be my womb, but
could never be a comforting hovel,
or resting ground away from
world-wind and flame.
The stone-frame maims my voice
from protesting, strikes a match
to my endurance and holds me in
its damp, dusty dorm.
The stone-frame lets me dream of miles
away from its door, but never lets more
than my imagination go wandering.
The stone-frame is my perception trapped
in faithless monotony, is my coward smile
that fears the chaos outside
its grey, unchanging walls.

Nothing Without You

Like a hawk whose
shadow falls first on the mouse
before its talons carry the prey away,
so first falls the static shade
where confusion and useless struggles reign,
before the soul is scooped into a killing sleep,
and all that was familiar falls, below the manic moon.

I tried to give away the things I was wedded
to keep, I tried to drown in the fire of your demand,
but the wage was too high though my glass eyes still glow
for the house of your deliverance.

And in my bed where the prayers arrive to grip
and alter my unconscious flow, I feel you near like
a lover and like death, patiently waiting my embrace.
Your drink is wonderful, though
my passions falter and my habitual fears are relentless.
Your love beats the bitterness from my breast,
rips my nightmares
of their shields so that I crumble like a wood-stack with
one middle-wood-piece pulled, until I have
no reverie for all these worldly things.

And with my self-might crushed and your mercy
by my side, all but that love is made the fool,
subdued then denied.

Days To Break The Richest Dream

Eucharist thin
and glued to the roof of the mouth,
hope comes stale, comes
in farmers' overalls, carrying a snide,
deceptive charm.

Hope is for him a sad mason building
a phantom hearth. For him, these days
weigh like unwashed hair on his fixed brow. For him
these days are tedious as housework.

But he does not fade like some do into
masculine despair which is anger,
which is not the saddle he mounts,
but perseveres with a steady pace,
his long fingers waving in perfect rhythm
inside a room, where hardships reach living
but mild.

A Month Unthawed

You sleep each day
without sunlight.
Gentle, as always, you
resign to the fatal bruise
inside. You look with sick,
half-closed eyes, with love,
barely visible, but in your veins
death is unveiling, deliberate.
I am the one to hold you,
to weep a yellow suicide,
to press your thinning back
with my palm, maternally
holding, whispering of sunflowers
and of faith.

Any other would have sank
into the hairy blood of wrath and blame,
but you and I, with an affinity between
that no illness can kill, are bearing this as one.

You are the favourite seashell found as a child,
a warm hearth in a room of shadows.
You have comforted me when the world
harassed and promised to rule.
And now humbled to lose what I cannot lose,
the doorway is opened.
Hope is what has been given.
Strong together in this giant pain,
we will raise each hour as a lifetime
and believe, unflinchingly, in miracles.

New Lovers

In rooms of wood
and desire's breath
they move like beggars
in one another's arms,
lulling their elements together,
lucky to forget the world outside, to live
inside passion's timeless dark,
ebbing in their throats and loins and in
the touching of hands.

Blue like hot fire and like water
nakedly combined, the signature of love is
mounted on their foreheads & toenails,
on dust cloths and in the bathroom sink.
Fully revived, they are like infants
awake to all the animals and sounds
spirits make.

It floods them in dangerous peace.
It is shadowless, apple-pure, a blessing
to cling to when time drives their hearts
into realms of pride's separate sleep.

Donkey

Large liquid eyes,
a slow four-legged walk,
seeking true affection from my hand
that wanders along your cheeks and nose -
its gravel grey, brittle as the straw
you sleep in.

Small and old as so many lonely are,
you follow me along the fence,
patient for my touch, for a soft voice
to speak your name or a palm
to stroke your dusty back.

Like the feel of foreign sand
or the miracle of a flower,
our hearts join in this brief faction of time
as I stop walking, offering some plucked grass -
a token of our mutual need.

As The Serpents Scatter

I lean
my back on the clock.
I drop the bitten sandwich
in a cellar full of mice. Joy
dries like the singing grave,
dries the eyes of sorrow. Snip. Snip.
I am burning a blade over the neck
of Death. I am under the kiss
of a leopard - turtle bones
in my back pocket.
Deep as loneliness are habits that nurse
these days with doing.
The eggshell is carved
like a prayer repeated - known
and drained of substance.
I roar on roads and highways.
I am the sound spiders love to carry,
love to hunt and consume.
I am a white feather caught in a cloud.
Do you see the house by the water?
Do you know the trap of each stepping stone?
I turn my back on the seducer's claw.
I have my hope to blame.
But there is love in an owl's wild eyes.
And there is a dream I cannot bury.

Possessive

This vice I keep
is like a limb, blistered
and useless. I swallow
it down a bloody throat,
into a pocket of stubborn hurt. There,
it unmuzzles my scream
and shrouds the sun in tar.

Why do I harvest the fear, the desperation,
in dreams where the bonds of love
collapse and I convulse
in betrayal's shock?
Why won't it go when my lover is true,
and honest tenderness
is the substance of his heart?

This vice I drink like
a hallucinogenic, obscures a living vow.
It has a face like an abscess, reeks
like an earthworm's underground home.
This vice comes cruel
as a hunter's bullet, comes like vinegar
in the eyes, baptizing my nerves
in a thieving rage, until I am
overwrought, fractured, ambushed
by its primal illogical cry.

Party

Rake the light,

I am alone upon
this distant stone.

I drum my plea,
no good for love
or beds of needed warmth.

I lose because I am not in need
of protection any more, because
my smile is drugged and time has dulled
the green glory of affection.
Stalk the depths where subtle glances can
separate the living and make hurt a hell
that is not snuffed out with each sip of drink.

Hang the flower-head on the wall, pray that life
is more than memories and gentle speaking.
I stand beside him. He is not in love,
but the highway is in his eyes, and the hummingbird
too, fluttering faster with each crack
of laughter.

It is the weather. It is no time for kissing,
but time for quiet sitting, for watching
the parasite inside grow to eclipse the sweet dream,
that gnaws a well of sensual sorrow
and is for always bonded - irrepressibly, your own.

The Jesus Fire

When I saw words
that no symbol shadowed,
old as life, stripped
of mask and sleep . . .

When my heart broke
from too much truth, broke
and was humbled, carried
and was humbled like a dragonfly
is by the wind . . .

When what was so familiar
became new, burning all space,
building the consciousness
of death, of choice, of the wanting communion . . .

When I was fed with this food
and my enemies ran naked in visions
of wounding beauty . . .

I was lifted
I was one among many, safe
as a sapling
sheltered by the brave devotion
of a lonely child.

Chosen Kin

There is something
that binds us to share
our hardships like a team,
to talk for hours, burying
our inner enemies under the grass
of a richer shade.

There is a hawk riding our favourite
window, poems where our coffees sit,
warming our hands, the brittle veins.

There is you with your eccentric
brilliance, your diligent searching
and laughter of open endings.

There is this time given,
living on the same street,
a season in our lives graced,
an offering of salt and sun,
and a trust between that leaves
nothing up the sleeve, housing our hearts
where only family can tread.

Birthright

Always the soiled
creeping feather in my gut,
destroying my aspirations
with its ticklish bite.

Always me talking to spiders, caught
in a sack where only the dead cat does not struggle.

I know no one, know not why I burn
and recoil into my net, into
this nude rebellion and its futile rage.

I want a basket of grapes at my doorstep,
a child of my own.

I want to run barefoot on soft fruit, believe
there is more than the growing weight
of this chain and ladder.

Lessons at the End of the Rope

Be there to let the night wind in,
let it fill your bones with its darkness,
knead its spikes into each nerve,
until collapsed, unrecognizable, you
see yourself primal, stripped to the root
of ancestral fear, until you see
your house on fire, and all your children trapped.

Then begin with involuntary surrender
and let your eyelids hang limp and
the towel of your dignity too.
Let loneliness be your inheritance prize,
not the public judging eye.
Let the empty schoolyard be your bed.

Believe all the more within your doom
though God's love can appear pitiless
in the framework of time, it will arrive
fresh-faced, answering and apparent
when you trust the hood and ways
of the tide.

Nights With You

After all the marvel has flown
and the egg is minced inside
its nest, I feel you in my sleep
as a babe feels its mother's breast,
or a tribe its evening song.

I feel my skin brushed with gravel,
feel doubt sealing me inside its zoo,
feel my hope sink like money into a reeling sea,
then you with your labyrinth of love,
discover new ways to restore me, to hold me
close to your taut belly and drown
my breathing on your flesh.

I cross through the cabin doors. I soar within
November skies. My secrets are no longer mine.
And morning finds me strong in my footsteps,
patient once more.

Imprisoned

I cannot lose you
nor live as your body
nears death. And soon
the sun will descend and
your little breath will be the all
to fill my hours. Soon
friends will gather and kneel
for you and for me.

What a vicious teacher
this illness is, impotent and
sterile in its madness. Five
months immobilized by pain.
Lingering like a wasp lingers
near a babe's fresh face,
it takes with it our fear,
our anger, our hope, all but our love
that cranes its touch over this grief,
guiding us through the inevitable.

In Spite of Vows

Desire mends
the wax-faced age
of calm acceptance.
It is for her a child
belonging to bravery, hearing
clouds collide and command.
It is for her, a hand
regaining touch, a kitten
retrieved from the cold
or something underwater
finding gills to breathe.
It mends the crack in the
pavement. It is so long
coming, unavoidable
as the moan of taunted bees.
It is hers - strong ribbed, flushed,
eager to release whatever prevents
its satisfaction from being blessed
and openly achieved.

You Are

You are simple
like death is simple,
like death is unmistakable,
containing the most feverish and trying
of mysteries within
its boundless domain.

You are beautiful
like a cat is beautiful
silently sitting,
galactic in its sensual form,
giving with its gaze
substance to voice and blood.

You are fire-driven
like stars and like sex,
in perpetual combustion,
with an inner pulse of endless
dance, dancing
in savage, mystical tides.

You are gentle
like a raindrop caught
in a lucky palm, gentle
like the shelter of a best friend's arms.

You are more than sun and bird and fox,
more than soil to my groundless heart.

All I bless and all I need,
I hold because of you.

No meaning nor madness
could replace the milk and breath
that you are.

Where Gold is Blood

Turn, turn

the tunnel darkly
to see the slash of destiny.

Wherever the unquenchable heart
crosses the common path, grief hisses on the tongue,
and like a falcon drenched in acid, death
discolours the air. The wax is broken,
fingers are frozen, butterflies weep, and
no grain of wheat will rise.

Give, give

what can only be given,
let the oil and ribbons fall.
Dreams are mortal, but not a vision,
for each must find the stride
of their chosen kin.

The Storm That Saves

**So he lives,
watching himself bemused in the mirror.
He lives his life with flying
pine needles and emaciated toads.
He wants to surprise the careful one
who guards against letting go.
He wants to fall at the heels of morning, dive
from branches into the open mouths of children
first learning the meaning of "mine". He is willing
to wrap himself in snake skin, dip his
features in tar, anything to reach
within a scalp and raise perception from
its daily doings.
He is the grave digger, the bee in need of a flower.
He is the body's sex, the yearning
engraved upon each bone,
a doorway in the tenebrous, compelling unknown.**

Of Body and Spirit

I seek your mouth
of sensual burning,
its sponge-soft pressure
merging perfectly with mine.

I seek its subtle textures,
its waxing and waning, the way
it condenses my being into
its single substance, into
a movement of focused bloom.

I seek your hair, your blessed smell,
your hip bone rocking like
the whole of the sea over uncharted sands.

I seek your voice sweeping the air
with its rich unconscious moan.

I seek the taking of your hand,
the tension of our bodies balanced
in mutual, animal awakening.

Wedding

Wake the house, the ants and dandelions too!

His eyes are bright as candy,
they warm my earth and sky.

His hands deliver comfort
like a child's, they bud with open hunger
and reach with the strength of a grail.

His arms are sails bounded
for adventure.

His legs dash the firmament
into many stars.

One day, this day he vows his everlasting to me.

Wake the music from each lung and finger!
Wake the oyster from its shell!

Time yields to our togetherness.
Time quenches our blood in Spring.

Three Blessings in the Shade

Two lone crows on a crust of snow
pecking to find sustenance. They,
the keepers of precious
wings and intelligent things
that seemed to sense my sorrow
as I passed, gave something back
which time took - a seed to see
equal wonder in the vast array of branches above
and in the muddied ice on ground.

A good person arrived and
with a brief turn of his lips, warmed my mind,
put colour where greyness had webbed my love
in a fatalist's prison.

I felt the three dance. I felt the simple,
the heroic and the awake. And driven
to merge with the blending foliage,
I was pulled toward the aching arms of high trees.
There, in flight, I was blessed.
I experienced a soft
and a useful death.

Like the Colour Blue

Loud as a horse's
excited hoofs, night
springs into my station, sufficient
with its dread.

Would this delicate hurt
but fall away or undulate within
without my knowing, then I could
run on beaches or sit
in a rocking chair for hours,
leaving the brutal spawning clouds behind,
and learn the glory of a new opinion.

The Tension and Terror of Being

**I see no brave and better
day than what we own.**

**I see no more precious challenge
than that which is given us -
to chose decisively between
goodness and malice, to long
for God and long criminals from
their slumber.**

**The heaviest pity, the most sheepish betrayal,
the refuge of ugly ambition, all murder done by pride
is but a shaky father preparing for the grave.
And to glimpse the light that offends the forsaken,
who would avert evil for a grain
of this glad devotion?**

Without Opportunity

Because today you descend
the broken branch and meet
the soil, be hot against the vaulting
of your despair. Turn and let die
your mangled wanting, want for
tomorrow and that is all.

Angry terror troubles your eyes
and gloves your admirable strength.
But your fingertips are gentle, stroking
music out from death's dim head.
And your pulsing vision crosses city gardens,
repelling every complacency.

Because today your life is in bondage
to the ill-luck groan, and each obstacle seems
to make your desires
both a burden and a disgrace, I who know you
and know life's tyrannical fault, have only belief
to effect your numbed hopes,
have only what I know -
the greatness of your labour
and the way you have moved
my most hardened of vices, to turn
and face a kinder shore.

Matriarch

Grandmother is reciting
a rhyme from Indian lore,
in the evening on the sofa as her
90 year old mouth loosens in the firelight,
and I am crowned with knowing
that here, beside her is a warmth
I never before could drink,
that beside her, other than strength and conviction,
is a softness that journeyed on in spite of
her husband's death, that lives in the motions
of her caramel hands clasped on her lap
in the evening on the sofa as this Christmas day sun
shimmers its last ray of savoury gold.

What Day?

What day will I be like a stallion,
copper-coloured, brimming with
restlessness and love?

What day will I be looking at the lusting sun
and still remember the small - small
as a mouse's eyes, small like a dew drop
or a sparrow's swift heart?

What day will I know my luck has run out
and be brave with such a secret?

What day will the fear leave me
and when it does, will my nightmares
limp out of my skin to rot in the backyard,
gaining nothing on eternity?

What day will I lose my shoes,
run my road free of judgments and
the cold ghosts haunting, in pursuit?

What day will my being sleep,
sleep like a sculpture,
unknowing of hunger, unaffected
by its own inadequacies?

Dying Sculptor

A thousand nations
coil within her veins,
within hands whose blood
have slowed despite their
depth and ecstasy.

In her poncho of sunset orange-red,
in her hospital bed
where the dim light looms
through a window on the ninth floor,
she is adorned in conscious resolve.

Conscious of the pain that creeps under
her covers like an unwanted lover, creeps
through her body like a narcotic,
mauling her mind
chaotic and cruel.

Yet with an optimism that rages beyond
her physical doom, she watches
the conversing of trees and stars
from the window in her room, gently easing
in and out of sleep.

Show of Light

Why is it like this - this untimely shift
from requiem to rhapsody
as your voice and manner tilts my heart
like the wind would direct the ripples in a stream?

I hurt alone in bed, resigned
to the falseness of your mouth, then
with morning, the lushness of your love
recites an elegy to my fear and once again,
adoring, I call you one with my own.

Who would guess that neither years nor vows
take the sour sting and peppermint wing
out from love's strong bones. But falling
forever - the darkness, the renewing song,
hands over bodies, yours & mine, as time
lies with us, perched as the watchman
on devotion's elusive bow.

Baptized

Then when goodness was torched
with an indelible flame,
and toothless innocence
was molested by ambition, pale were the days
that followed, dashed against
the rocks of prophetic doom.

I was where I should not
have been, in jealousy's
neck-breaking grip. I was
in despair's limp embrace. And
the child I once was and the child that
fell among these faithless fears, grew up
clutched between the devil's burning fangs,
until I cracked and bore a new being
out of my tattered shell.

Now when my lips part for air
and are happy to receive
and love is daily fostered,
darkness lives like one more covenant gift
to milk for the heart's deep roar
and resurrection.

By Water

As flesh pours into flesh,
at once gentle, then convulsing,
she burdens onto him
her conscious mouth to let it be
a mouth of primal need, needing his
fingers and belly, his lips of perfect
artistry. She burdens onto him
her womanhood, to be
voicelessly living like long ago,
before shame and analysis was known.

Finding death in such miraculous merging,
finding immortality in the immediacy
of loving without symbol, they hold together
like a long-sung note,
delivered.

Here, I am lifted

into your fanatic faith
that bleeds like the wind
a steady downpour.
I hold your hand. I listen
and long for you on every street
I wander. I long for your emotions
to be within me, overpowering, altering
my earth with their unashamed passions.
I long to view your eyes in all eyes I see,
to view them in the half-dead stars mounted
in this city's sky, to know you,
your manhood, suffering and strength.
I long to dream myself into seizure like you
who grieves for the most forgotten sinners,
like you who receives the wounds of every innocent
and continues wanting (tirelessly wanting)
for more.

Upon These Hours Sleeping

I look upon hours sleeping
with dreams of this world,
dreams of shallow greed
and changing lusts, and
I dissect the shadows I once
bent to embrace, filled with their
shadowy blood, their saltless blood,
suffering still under the forces of
drudgery and unnamable despair.
I hear lunchboxes scream a cancerous
pleasure. I tell the sky to hold me
in its infinite blue womb, to make me master
of these smallish needs, to fill me with
a love to latch onto that will guide
in summer and winter both, that will not
be outdone, despite the pit I now descend
and tomorrow's slow struggle out.

In Praise of Walt Whitman

**He wandered as an individual,
care-full and tender with all he touched.**

**He embraced beauty in his arms
by embracing a young man's dying limbs or
the trunk of a tree, hundreds of years old.**

**Faithful, clean, pursuing
vitality and depth with compassionate strength,
he was what each hopes to be,
entirely oneself, unafraid of battle
or of withering or joy, unafraid to stake
everything
for the necessity of honest expression.**

**He, with his brave, child-like being, waded
in the brutality of war, in the ponds of dazzling
and delicious Nature, equal in his love
and in his giving.**

Addiction

Today I am preserved from the withering chill.
I am held at a hair's length from misery,
but held and still frightened.
Frightened of my pulse
that beats (poor like it is)
in defeat's domain.

All my passions betray
the nurturing hood and spade,
drag me down to horrors that hound, that make
my spirit overflow
with nullifying waters.

But today I am spared
the snarl and self-pity,
spared the blank death that outruns
every attempt to breathe, spared
because I asked for a little faith and
was given.

This

is yours,

**and all that comes
from your silence
into the wounded world,**

comes to rectify what is confused

**comes to give substance to each
shape and circumstance.**

**This that quickens our pulse,
makes us scream or praise, cuts
the artery of our ego then mends with
communion.**

**This is always good,
destroys (in endurable amounts)
the attachments that keep us from you.**

**This is our stumbling block
and our cane, arrives with the most mercy,
healing what can be healed
by setting the rest of us aflame.**

Child Unconceived

Tomorrow may bring you nearer
to me, but then it may cause
grief that no instinct nor love could
rectify.

If I cannot form the dustgrain of your life
in my womb, cannot carry
your limbs within my belly proud
and drench my veins
with our combined blood -
(you and I merged for a time, guiltless,
expressing the earthy essence of God
with each our individual heartbeats),
then be damned my entrails
and this longing
that drives my impatient summer.

When I see your face for the first time,
and your father and I behold your
living smile, be sure
there will be a depth of welcome
that no hardship could turn cold
nor ever diminish.

Animal Sanctuary

He turns his hawk head
to view the shells of turtles streaking
the still-shroud of water in tanks
as blue as sky.

He lifts a leg and talons tensed,
pivots to defend against an enclosing shadow.

With whitish eyes and an impossible urge
to fly, he hops along his man-made perch toward
the cages where squirrels leap
from metal to wood, scattering like leaves
in unpredictable flurry.

He listens to the ducks' lipless sounds.

Spring, he will never experience again, nor know
the scent of a pent-up life released like
sunflowers blooming, or the feel of the moon,
colder but more comforting than being touched.

He is without time or tribe,
and like fire, he haunts
by just being.

The Last Walk of the Mayor of Casterbridge

Heaving strange
the pride in my mouth that will not drown.
After all love given and failed, to hold only this body
of a starved finch, gold but lifeless like all else
that has inspired me on. I shifted extremes, bandaged
my disappointments in bitter hate and landscapes
where only serpents were resurrected.

Of my self, I have no virtue to defend, what I have
is impulsive and merciless, and a fortune that has placed my fate
at the feet of a cunning enemy.

That I was saved from the seal of drunken suicide.
That I saw my own image float in the river, giving
seed to a non-judgemental faith, and she, my daughter
(who knew nothing of resentment), cradled my cure in the
compassion of her eyes. I walk with a simple fool trailing behind
who says I was rough but somehow kind, who seems to show
concern when I stumble and for my face so down,
it will never see daylight again.

He carries me to an abandoned shack
where soon I will die - he, unaware of the killer that I am.

If my daughter finds me, never let her know
the loneliness that drove my desperate deeds or the fear
I felt of losing her natural devotion. If she finds me, tell her not
to put flowers where I rest. Tell her not to grieve the aftermath
dust of the likes of me - a crushed,
unatonable man.

The Path I Followed

The topping night
presses its muddied finger
on me. Wounded, like
a country seized by internal strife.
Wounded, like a forehead fraught
with grief as ghosts spy on
and dissemble sensual minds.
The unmarried night, companion
to discordant prayers that rise as hopes
fall, handcuffs my despair to its
wet, warmless belly. My breast breaks
as I walk past porches, a schoolyard, new-cut
grass, breaks to hear the voices of strangers
so unconnected to my own, breaks in the night
like a sparrow between talons, says not a word
but walks further to where
no eye summons the gift of kindness,
and love is given without a gentle tongue.

Under the Coupling Clouds

Under the coupling clouds
weddings and funerals
reign, faith is crushed like
a blade of grass beneath feet and destinies
capsizes. Forging through life's worst mishaps,
enduring hearts still burn great
and potent dreams.

While reeling in the cries
of rat-bitten love,
comes legends of courageous
forgiveness.

Under these coupling clouds
people heed morning as an adored
second chance. Habits break
to let begin a blazing birth
received.

The Aging Artist

The breath of illness beating upon your flesh.
The dizzy and slow-paced walk causing you
for the first time to know dependency.

A breaking down of smiles and thoughts.
A terrain, where even your hands can't move enough
to create the sculptures that inspire you
to ward off the grave.

Your mind has weathered
an age of nagging conformity, has risen,
individual, brave in your isolation.

How lonely the trees must seem, peering from
your cabin doors. How lovely the sounds of waves
and wildlife, mingled in undying symphony.

What mourning, what wonder you must know,
with your eyes as blue and clear as they are old,
as you sit at your table -
 those years of longing past
 and the peace, at last, beginning.

Surrender

I yielded to touch, to
the coldness of my skeletal hopes.

I yielded toward a winding stairway
that led to where footprints travelled
through vines, through treeless grounds,
through oceans of lethal predators. I watched
as I was caught by fangs, watched
my each limb shred through teeth of earthly origin,
and soon no feeling, not even fear, remained.

The last of my blood was drained,
and once again I turned into a pale
and will-less thing like before I was given
body or breath.

Then by fingers made of fire, my paleness
was carved, foaming out of the cyclops eye of God,
forming nerves and nostrils - a new and
waking lid.

The Quenchable Drain Within

Like pale blood that rises
from cut skin, I see how poor
my devotion is.
I see my mind entranced
by frivolous difficulties
and mean shadows that drown
my lover's heart. I do not do. I dissolve
my conviction by distraction and thick
is my vanity that pulses louder than
my any prayer.

But like the undying air
I am comforted through
every break and self-betrayal.
Forgiveness drives out the ache
that keeps me immobilized,
where all is stultified by guilt.

With you I am whole,
despite my drifting thread-thin
desires and despite my own love
yearning.

Second Farewell

Thin like a crane's neck
or a starling's yellow beak
you loved.

Your voice too, I could not
brand in such darkness, could
only hope I was not deceived.
But there inside your empathetic
eyes was a sting, cold
as a dead animal's body.

I gave again my heart to be
grabbed by your airy claw. I lived
to hold one more winter in my hand,
to feel the bite, the monstrous white, for you.

I close the drapes to another sun.
I think of lone gravel roads of centuries ago
and am content to forget you.

I think of schoolyards where best friends play
- running, holding hands.

Every Hope Inhaled

Everyday there is no day
where the fullness of his being
goes unhatched.
Not a day when I do not smell
his smell and hunger
for the rub of his lips.
Not a day when he stands so distant
I forget the kinship we share,
the mousey tide he sprung me from
and the gro
und of faith he thawed in my breast.

Here in July with my fishscope-view
and the shifting of circumstantial thorns,
when the tombstone tumbles and each handful
of hope has been hacksawed off,
he alone helps justify
and lamps my richest theme.

Heart's Exchange

I look to see
your naked back
against the day's light
and see a language
translating the flow
of flesh, into wave and wind and all
that moves with the bouncing tide.

I am not blind
to the weeds of whirlwind circumstances.

But together, with eyes locked
in knowing love, we are like a mother with her child or
like that child, feeling (on open lips) a noon rainfall.

Through This Strand of Time

Breeze, I long to let lull
between my hairstrands
and move my heart to gentle sleep,
forgetting you and the reach of your
impulsive heart. Into my hands
the bit-bar of longing wanders, so that
my fingers scale the air in hopes of climbing
beyond this helpless loss.

Your primal vision is latched
to my own - I see you in dreams, with
your black eyes and unshifting devotion.
I see you when I walk, in crushed snails' shells
and rainwater puddles.

Through the hours of morning,
the shrill of not-knowing burns like plastic
on my tongue. I am
not far from falling, not far
from letting a pale tear take my all.

When I Close My Eyes

The voice I hear soothes my unwatered ribs,
speaks generous and strong that the
stagnant heat that has made them brittle
will pass like a wave that passes
over a rock, accommodating yet
still whole. The heat will die like heat
eventually does, rising up into
all-absorbing arms.

I will be removed from this vultured pit,
and when removed the pit will be remembered
as a womb. Then I will be praising
its every depth and syllable.

The voice I hear soothes my flesh-stripped knees,
singing of a mercy, indestructible.

Unrelenting Groove

Waiting to be pushed
from this groove. Groove of tilted hell where
a dull blade hammers like bad memories on the
seedlings of my thumb stroke.

Waiting like this, lamed by the unturning earth.
And music does not come, nor does the comfort
of a higher command. Trail of living,
of a brown boulder rolling forever down
Sisyphus' hill, of the hunter's proud cry
and the prey's ignored pleading. Trail of living
clockwise, of spinning around from week to week, waiting.

I am here. I am of anger and feathers both,
like the hawk that watches the constellations
to find its way home, I am so alone out here, feeling
not the pressing of lips my lover gives nor the kind
embraces of friends. Feeling again and again
the marrow sinking from my bones - and frail,
frail like an arrow without its tip, like a worm
on the pavement, drying up.

I am of the dead red cardinals' corpse. I am
of the plucked flower and the cancerous throat.
I am not
who I thought I would be.

Walk Low

**Walk low in case I forget
the roots of my deliverance.**

**Walk low so my head knows it is human,
and my heart touches daily the earth I will
return to.**

Walk low in days of joy, in hours of toil.

**Walk low when leaping over burning fields,
into a relentless hunger.**

**Walk low on the land and café corners,
kindled by the sun's yellow grain.**

**Walk low, remembering how I turned from
another's need, held a dead starling
with eyes unable to weep, and thought
myself good for getting through.**

**Red wagon on its side. Red dream filling my
mouth like fire.**

**Walk low for whatever in me that is true,
was given by and belongs
to only you.**

Blood Spent

I rest these limpid hands
on your face
where my shame falls.

For I was colour once, then I
turned chaotic like an insect
in a duststorm, swirling in
frail deathness, swirling in the
choking, greying air, sick against
you, cursed against you my morbid howl.
I was sad, but more than that, I was
falling from a great height, like
a grape to cold pavement. I was sunless,
and the maggots swarmed my mind, nibbling
my nerves with their hundred tiny mouths.
I was indulging, unable to control the violent
famine scissoring my breast. I spewed
my foaming tears on you. I came
destroying of every song.

The Hope of Lovers

With thin love
and a heart that pangs
unnourished, lovers
meet to undo their
bitterness and know again
undiscerning grace.

Meeting in passion's excessive
persuasion, all heavy wounds rise
to dissolve as though never there at all,
then reappear as embedded and destructive
as they really are.

They reappear beyond
any calm abstraction, as lovers lean on
the blindness of each other
to find their individual sight.

As lovers lean to advance with the strength
of two made whole, and lean to reach
the truth of love (forever re-told).

Elizabeth Barrett Browning

A visionary of intricate simplicity -
her mind was a hymn
of starving tenderness, her voice,
like manna to the desperately lonely.

For forty years, away from friendly enchantments,
isolated by illness and the societal conditions
of womanhood, she held her belief intact and found
a kindred grief, a kindred gentleness
living in a man. Living for her,
a love at last, to parallel her intense
devotion. Living for her, a love awake to eternity,
terrible in its purity, saving.

She died one day in the depths
of her lover's arms, leaving behind
her legacy, recorded by words
of faith and the rhythms of
those flooding fires.

Quebec City

On plains of autumn green
where hardly bird or squirrel roam,
the dream we find by holding hands
is like a wave of sunshine
undulating on our brows.

On streets of winding stone, old
as Medusa's smile, old as wounded
pride resting on an enemy's throne,
we laugh at the struggling day - mouths
full of kisses and a hunger soothed to sleep
by so many unforced smiles.

Up stairs once crushed by cannon ball fire
we lift our limbs to see where the city wall
extends. We are both thinking
of the good day behind, both sniffing
the devouring scent of unforgotten history.

Evening drifts through our hair.
We are alone, like all babes are and lovers too
who have perfectly communed
beneath this Northern sky.

The leach that reaches

into my fleshy eye,
cramps and blinds my bed
of grand delight.
The straw I crouched in when a kid
is all that remains
of childhood's play,
is with me wherever I go,
scratching my skin beneath my clothes.
Hard is the squeeze of the agonized wind
arriving where the sun cannot follow.
I am that wind, a maiden puff of breeze
that wanders without knowing
away from the sky.
A woman's time, five days that crack
the palm and rid the attic
of all sane hope.
Because the voice is madness.
Because there are funerals in my fridge
and mouths opening and closing on the wall.
Tonight, this is home and nothing to do.
Tonight, my mind is forsaken
by my body's blood and mood.

My Heart Creeps

My heart creeps through the caverns of death, examining each pothole, each lost, decaying soul. And there I find you curled against the light, resigned to the apathy that has infected your flow. I drift to where the weepers are and the howlers of animal grief. With me, you go, though your head is barely lifted and your eyes are dull like sanded jewels. With me, through the eerie tunnels where stones lay in wait for us to stumble upon - stones of helpless rage, stones of defiant fear, of overwhelming hopelessness, of blaming life for what must be endured. We manage together beyond these rocks of bitter doom to an opening where an angel's steady hand strokes our spines, loves us in our wanting, though we see no change, see only sickness, months ahead without cause or cure. The angel sleeps beside you, merges its goodness with people who help to give me strength so I can give you what you need. We journey as friends whose souls combine. We press foreheads and wait for the burden to break. The angel speaks in the wings of crows who pass our home day and night. The angel speaks through the T.V. screen, through the smile of your compassionate caretaker. It tells me to hold on, to hold you, be patient in this grief. The angel holds my hand. He cradles you in his dress. He tells us death is nothing. Death will not come. He sacrifices his breath to you, then kneels for your recovery.

Leaning in the Weeds

Drink for the stopping of stormy pride, not
for the one word irreparable
under the sun.

When longing ceases for everything
but the grave and the mind spins in
shock, in rage, then what could
never be, becomes real enough to erase good memory.
Hope and love's security crash in the cumulative point -
a wound released that will consume more and more.
Hear the mock of watching angels, the friend
beside you, happy for your defeat.
Why does envy ring a lunatic groan,
as if it was pure instinct that cannot be controlled?
Where does the courage hide to face this bitter,
blinding ghost?

Through the night of blasphemous pain,
leaping into the burn of violent betrayal,
no morality can restrain this filthy eye -
defeated, deformed, surrounded on all sides.

elegy of this day being

At the throat, brushed green like tile I shine.
The devil says "hum-drum"
as the eel struggles, futile like a wagging tail.
So many broken, hating with the hardness of crocodiles
and ants, pulling along their dead,
to consume, knowing nothing of sorrow or forgiveness.
All night I sit with my naked thighs
on the carpet, red from the heat.
What point could there possibly be
to all this pain, the death
of others, the sickness that swarms in mid-air?
Hurricanes hit the graveyards.
A gull tilts on a telephone wire. I wish to bid goodbye.
I wish for ice-cream cones in my fridge,
a handful of poppies to give some child,
any child, I meet.
I see dead eyes in my dream,
glossed with mucous and unbearable vacancy.
How do I serve when the world is so cold?
The humpbacks know this, the midgets
and also the centipedes.
I want to hide in rooms where
infants are sleeping or salamanders nurse their young.
The darkness is in me. The ground deceives me,
changes colours as I go.
Let us go now, my nightmares
and I, go under the light, go until
our heart's blood is free-falling, exposed.

Heritage

In a room of celibate smiles,
in a fever of shame and reprimand
they hold the symmetry of hardness and
idolatry, they adore their
dying god like a babe, adore
his bleeding wounds and delicate face.
They curse the children for their freedom,
forgetting the tenderness he spoke,
forgetting the force of renewal
that penetrated his every sharing speech
and unnerving demand.
They axe away the threat of all non-conformity,
maul the flesh of each guiltless dreamer.
They hold back what he said each must give, blessing
only snivelling sentiment and hands offering gold.
They are in beds leaning next to spells,
cuddled close to candlelight and the demeaning lure
of confession. In a room of fur coats where hearts
never dare to melt, they judge with turned backs
what they cannot kill or control.

Dream

Again it came like hari-kari,
twisting my innards on its holy blade.
It came at 4 am, into my lungs and brain,
like a new death-rattle sounding
an old, familiar fate.
It came under the blankets like a scorpion
between my husband and I, touched me
with its tail then raised its head to my eyes.
It unchained my killer-hand, bent my tree
until it broke. It found me in the violence,
in the night of unconscious beginnings and
jealousy too brutal to be controlled.
It plucked my morals one by one, like plucking
a cat of its whiskers. It turned
me into a nameless creature, into a betrayed
and raging deformity of myself. It came
like scissors to a flower, like an axe
to a pig's straining neck. It came
from where, I do not know, but came again
as though portraying something within
that I must unclothe and undeniably own.

Purest Obedience

Like a fierce wind
driven by the fires of Jerusalem, he
overtakes me from my eyelashes to my
fingernails, mends the hole in my sock,
the scar on my lip.

Like a new truth spoken, like the
veils of God dropping, he calls me
to his table, cleans my confusion,
spins me on my axle and holds his hand to mine.

He is the one thing guiding,
the one that takes all else into itself,
saturating me with good fear
and with the safety that children know
beside a parent's accepted love.

Overcoming

As the fledgling swallow falls
onto the rainy ground,
so false shields fall, leaving
us raw inside the middle, wet inside
the middle, spilling forth our old defence.

As the snows come in spring,
so greyness can cloak the brightest
change because it is change and is
hard to come by.

As two old people talk with their hats
and canes, so the angels talk to our hearts,
steadily being, patiently being beside
our every gesture.

As is the lamp in a winter's night, so
is the grace that feeds our eyes
with its kindness. And holy is the one
who stumbles but finds a way to stand.
And holy is the effort to love when the dragon
embraces our being within its scaly arms,
tries to break our faith with fiery addiction, or
with bitterness as blue as its damp, hungry tongue.

Because of Yesterday

Through this dark dread I will glide
like the devil's tail beating
my mark on every hope and innocence.

When the rain falls I will be without humble hands
to receive, I will have lost my one good gift in life.
I will clock the years as one who feeds
on the thinning muscle of memory.

And in bed, curled against an indifferent wall,
my mind will turn toward a new myth
to encapsulate my joy. I will grow old
like love does, like children do, like the sparrow will
who rejoices despite a heavy snow. I will be without
your hand to hold and forever my heart
will know no other.

Breaking the Circle

Trapped like a boat
under a wave or like
a girl in adolescent angst,
I feel the pouring of all my emotions,
wooing me to an attic hide-a-way.
There is no answer but to leap
from this sting, from the weeks
snagging my music, leap
from my birth, into a new heritage,
a journey of dreaming my madness alive.
Where will the crows be when I fall?
At my doorstep or above on telephone
wires, conveying comfort with their eyes?
Where will I fall from this navy sky? -
a word on a grain of rice, a lamp in a window,
a dying, but lucid voice? Seashells
collected as a child. The river is blind.
Trapped now and holding - soon it will end and
the trees outside will whisper, developing
a new landscape of imagination.

Once I Cried

Once I cried the conscious death,
reborn in the orb of humiliation,
mopping the slime off floors,
nausea permeating the base of my spine.

Once I was trapped in a wavering faith,
shifting in a restless sleep
from nightmare to being awake.
My skin was caked in lime, scorched by
the unharvested dream.

Quick the sky cracked as though scissors
sliced right through,
and the spell of suicidal defeat reshaped
into an era that was past and never to be relived.

The house door opened, the sore removed,
the picture frame expanded to encompass
more than I ever knew.

And now with rent unpaid and time
a driving axe, the grass looks gold
as my dignity blazes through the flood
like a beloved ship unchained.

Heart-bearing

Here our lover's seed
speaks secretly from its shoots of giving rays.

Here there is no drug-red hurt,
no drowning in the juices of jealousy.

Here no lightning permeates our veins,
no kiss is given for convenience's
sake, but all is like a wild lily that
brightens with its orange bud the eye
that rests and observes.

Gentle is the itch of my restlessness.
Gentle is the way you hold my hand.
I am raised, I am the first fulfilled.
Flood your breath around me
and together in life we will shape
our possible world.

path

I look to the earth,
it is a shadow made
of stone. It turns its
grey-lake eyes to me,
it dreams a white cloud,
communing with trees and
growing things - strong
in their mutual stillness.

I look on the December day
where the private raccoon roams
and crows congregate
to threaten a passing form.

The path where the young bird perished
is where no one but my dog and I go.
He sniffs the fresh-fallen snow as squirrels
sit motionless, looking on.

And in this tender wood there is no
division between my heart
and God's great wing.
There is no time not brushed with beauty.
There is no pavement slush, no hand
that reached out, I would not hold and trust.

Of The Same Cloth

A perfect balance
of mystery and understanding
we contain in our
fiery hour.

Like a gull
against the sky, we merge under
the thick thighs of God.

You enter me like water
enters earth and I am within
you like a fish inside a wave.

Wave of your exotic beauty,
always capturing me, new to me, a taste
of perfect fulfilment. You bare the teeth
of a stranger, a hand of delicate,
tireless motion and I sink in the snows
of your spell, chilled by your intensity, by
the beautiful form of a man beside me.

You give to me the gallery of your secrets
as I give to you the skin of my defence.

We are the lucky one:

marigolds and cathedral stones
line our weathered pockets.

Face

Inside your luscious eyes
is the burden of depth,
are the stones and rivers
of centuries unguarded
by time.

On your lips
is the sensual curve of tree-line
and sea-shell, is a language
unbroken by bad experience.

On your nose
of boyish turn are nostrils
unlocking the breath of endurance,
is the edge where sunlight rests
after travel.

On your forehead
is a heavy mist of
oscillating pain and grace,
are the marks of a struggle
relieved by love.

On your jaw, cheek and chin
is the strength of the moon
and night-wooded things,
is the hoot and howl
of the sleepless earth, ascending.

After twelve

affirming years,
your head is raised toward adulthood.
After twelve like the zodiac sphere,
they came to snatch your heart
into a barren day, where conformity
would dry the void in your stomach
and the radio would be enough to hang your
curiosity upon. But you, like a starfish,
swam slowly out of childhood - kindness intact,
individuality still pressing through your bones.
You would not tip the turtle on its side,
would cry for the crushed ant, for children
in pain you never saw. You kept the truth
you had when you were one, kept a depth and wonder
that refused to be buried.
After twelve affirming years,
the night still beats
softly for you.

Near Daybreak

A flood of gentle morning,
grey from last night's storm.

The form of all I long for
leaps into a cloud.

Branches fall, crows call
out to me, an old man
walks with a doorframe in his arms,
cursing the sunless sky.

I sit in my morning chair, the faint
hum of distant cars soothes my belly
of its lonely ache. Balconies are
deserted, and even squirrels continue in sleep.

Who loves when no one is around, in this
embryonic stillness, this cloak of ash and humidity?

God is in the churchbell waiting its first ring,
in the dreams of the dying, and in the chestnut tree unbloomed.

God is in the tails of chasing cats,
the underwear on the line, and in
the pressure of time, as this morning lulls
its carefree, sabbath song.

In a Stillness

Just add upon our days
of private history
this day, that for each is different.

Let God get us through
what vanity and determination cannot
and let spirits rise or sink,
like constellations do, given their hour.

Serpent pain, hollow time lingers
like a bad stare from a wounded heart with
bad intentions. I break doors but travel
unseen, thin as a ghost through crowds of ghosts,
placeless in this torrent sea of World.
And World alone, I beg to and compromise for
the duties of my higher heart.
Things tear inside, but I know God is here
just the same as when there was no ache
and love was fiercely felt
from all encounters.

Praying Mantis

I see the praying mantis, the reaching mantis,
dumb, deep in the guts of a searching spirit.

Reaching mantis, holding
confusion between two insect toes, whispering
"no" to all demanding choice and deeds that char
the innards with renewal.

I see the praying mantis
speaking of the pride of diversity, of never committing
absolutely to anything, let alone of leaping
into the darkest doom with love.

I see the praying mantis
snaring the ones who strive with a smile.
Thin mantis smile, wide as every religion combined.
Thin, I feel its mantis legs itch the skin,
never giving relief or satisfaction.
Thin like a thread is to hang from.
Thin like the story of an empty house:
Nothing breathing and no one
to talk to.

Nightmare

I harbour this hemisphere
of thundering fears. I close my eyes
and whirl in the anger of
my imagination, bellowing curses
to eyes I love and faces that
have never failed me. My pain
is loud like chaos is,
and near the threshold of cold madness
my mind is thrust, helplessly
betrayed and collapsing. I dream
with grief, without control,
doomed by suspicion, by anxious motion,
hatching a dread beyond the healing
of forgiveness.
Out of a blank curve I awake
like one whose mouth is
ice, mute, in rising
shock.

Out of Poverty

Crack the nut, the womb
of fabulous visions!

The verb will carry us
to the beginning. We will
have no doubt, but as the window opens
and our nostrils clear, and
believing only,
we will be made whole.

Pumpkin seeds in the garden.
A spell of sparrows grazing on the lawn.
We must be mild, remember the beauty of the pear tree
and the miles around us
of living parables.

Red is the colour. Red is the flood pouring
down your spine. You are burning, becoming
a sail to bring us through the storm.
We are learning of patience, the heritage
of our tribe.

We must keep our hopes
thick and warm, pulsing strong
like a lion's thundering breast.

For a Lifetime

He outsizes the mountains
in his grandeur, and inward
reaching, his alleluia and amen are
uncorrupted. He is beside me
as I ready for sleep, and puts
his hand on my leg. Light like laughter, he curls
his fingers around my steady thigh.

We kiss and talk as if no tomorrow
awaited us, as if tomorrow's duty we are
chained to keep could not rule to condemn
us empty.

Tonight, trusting each other's love,
he is beside me like a dolphin against a wave.

And safe I breathe and safe I dream, safe
beside his need and
strengthening kindness.

From the Corner of My Eye

Torn from the spirit proclaiming,
and now revenge has abducted the anchor of
my feeble wisdom, has cut my coffin in half,
punishing with the anguish of duty and survival first.
Again I sing, disciplining myself

out of the clutches of madness, and
the dialogue of infants I hear in a terrible
dream that blames my rage on all the living.
I am yielding to the charms of my enemy's poison,
to the aftertaste that promises an antidote
but gives only a look in the mirror or
a bath towel in the morning.

I am grieving my imprisonment, welcoming
the nightmare because resistance is but
a shadow struggling against a real thing. I am
taking the canopy off my bed. I am gleaming with
guilt and the sheen of ingratitude.

Forward is the highest goal, to keep moving
in spite of words like 'freedom' and 'happiness',
in spite of our nature and our greed to
accumulate, to be outward looking for distinction,
or to obey what is in place because it is all
our private thoughts can explore. I made a sea creature
with clay and two hands. I kissed a cloud
with both eyes open. Let the world be crowned with
its two-week-vacation glory. Let my hourly wages
get the better of me. I am fixing to fail. I am reaching
for something strong like belief. And over my shoulder,
I see a gift of a thousand roses.

Everything Happens

Everything happens
meaning nothing, fashioned by lack
and political flags.

Who will stand the light,
a suicidal winter,
the awakened ghost under the bed?

Criminals build their heaven and
sinners are so beautiful, are us
in the full of our hypocrisy, our striving, lazy wills.

Joy. I know I could blossom
if only threatened by the cliff's edge -
held hanging by God's fingers
like an insect without wings.

Everything happens
like sleep eventually does.
I am lost. Too preoccupied with snails and moss.

But blessed be the hunger
and the saltiness of others.
Blessed be the essential, inseparable rib,
the quenching of all our boredom.

Beyond Instinct or Dreams

Renewal is in the night,
comes like lovemaking
to heal the bruise of harsh words
and lonely needs.

Because a cigarette is sometimes
all that is wanted, or good news in the mail,
and because the ways of the heart are erratic,
inconsistently falling as flakes of snow,
that is why we sometimes sleep with death
as we do with God, not holding but letting It hold
us in a warm invincible sack, offering promise, a journey
to somewhere unfathomable.

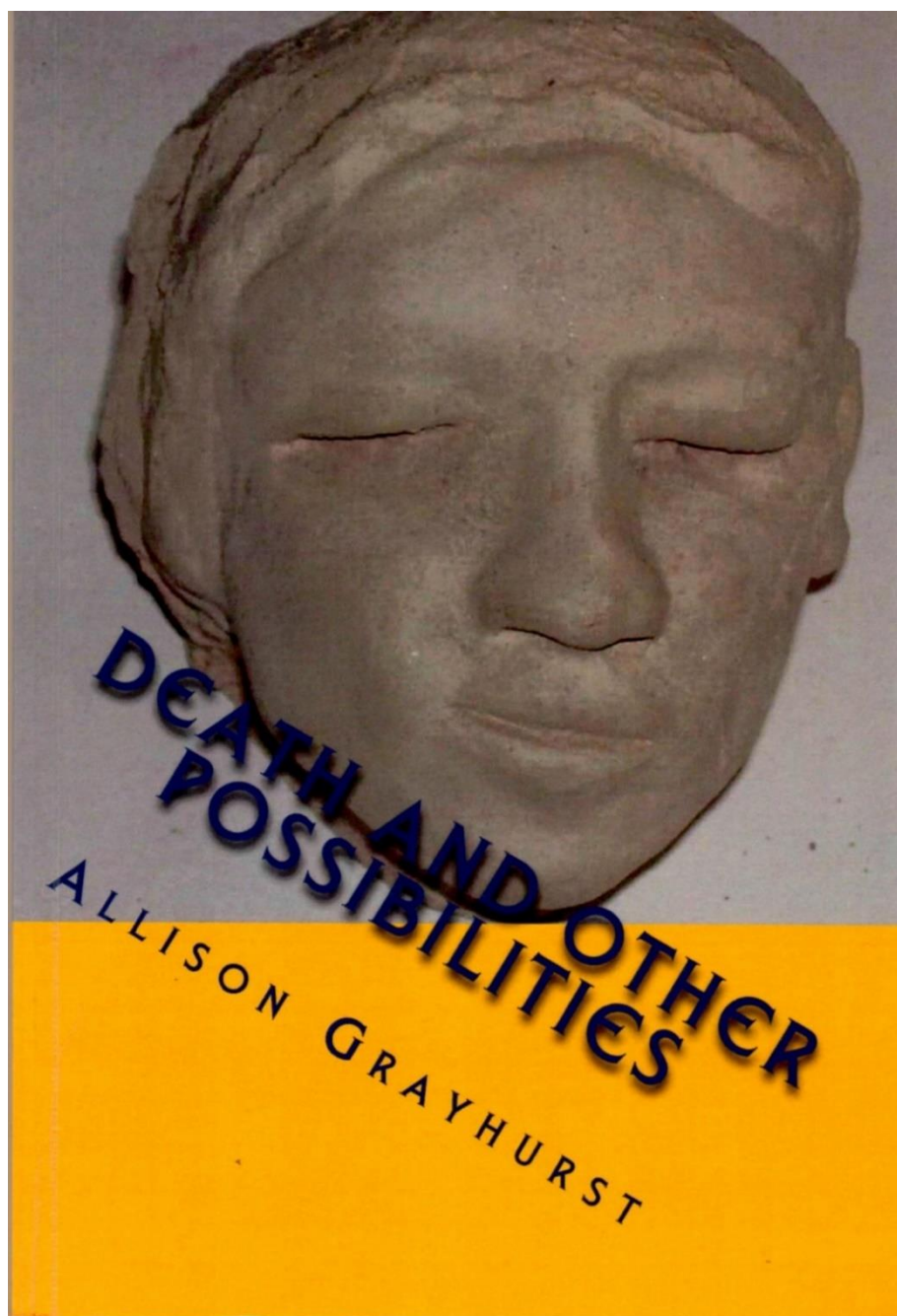
That is why some fear is good, is intimate as love.
And the sky is breathing and the oceans, the seas,
the rivers are breathing. And the beetle and the rooftops too.

Trees sway with the clouds.
The butterfly and guppy are great as mountains.
All chimes of tenderness or tragedy,
seeking its necessary role.
We bear the weight.
We take balloons to birthday parties.
And happy is the motion. And graced
are each of our failings.

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Review of The Longing To Be:

"The contents of Allison Grayhurst's book *The Longing To Be* are both personal and universal and are described in such thematic and golden terms that one can see that a lot of thought has gone into each line. The poems are written mostly in free verse throughout, with both rhythm and soul weaved into them. For some poems, the layout seems experimental, and there is definitely a playfulness in the way that the words and verses fall onto the page. Others do conform to a "norm", whatever that is. All are dramatic and thoughtful. These are layered poems with new horizons presented to the reader in every re-read. The effect is to keep things fresh with poems that constantly surprise in spite, and because of, the number of times being read. I thoroughly recommend *The Longing To Be* as a poetry book to study carefully and cherish far into the future," poet Brian Shirra.



Death and other Possibilities

Allison Grayhurst

Edge Unlimited Publishing

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Sheaves of Time

Sheaves of time like wispy hair
freed to the wind, fall on me,
tickling my skin with their subtle happening.
Happy are the people with soap opera love
and yellow hair.
Happy am I rolling and stretching & rolling
under the great white sun. I am moved
to deliver my package at noon. I am myself bonded
to my mission like ligaments to the bone.
Sheaves of time drift on my plate
like leaves from my favourite tree.
Call me out from my doubt and let me
love each day as new, with the kind of hope
only children hold, or lovers caressing faces,
feeling eternity on their fingertips.

Between Two Places

Nowhere I nestle -
my lover's away
and my horse has lost his pasture.
Under the lawnmower,
cut up like a paperdoll.
I will run down hallways,
find my good sign and a pond to drink from.
I will go in one direction, bring
my hands to my temples and think.
Think of a wet log by a river, of a
porcupine in the wood. I will count
the sparrows in the sky and when I'm done,
I will gather stones and call them beautiful.
But now there is this swaying road and my
albino heart. I am scattered, blurred
like a blueberry smeared upon a mirror.
Close at hand - the cable wire and the drugs.
I will find my bed, salvation in the bathwater.
I will tip the basket on its side,
feeding on the fruits that were once censored
morally denied.

Change

Let it come like the wave with
the salty foam. Let it reflect
my insides like a face held towards
new cutlery. Let it take my rhythm for
its own, express it in the wings of angry crows
and the trees in communion with the wind.
Let it steel my lover for four nights,
leave my bed an empty socket for all my
demons to gather and join. Let it hurl
a fist at the clock, at the pressure of duty
and guilt I should not feel. Let it mimic
my cries at the corner store where a woman
sits on a curb, crazy with undirected grief.
Let it be in the eyes of my cat as he stalks
the birds in his mind.
Let me kneel before it in my room,
and tell my husband what I have found.
Let it be like a fledgling in the morning singing
or like a wound that alters my appearance.

In Time

The mutual condition
of our heritage. The thump-thump
in your thigh. Thin as a warrior
of Japanese fortune and eyes
rustling like wool in the wind.

At bed time, the cockroaches are my cousins
and the movement of your housecoat is my water.
I found a necklace centuries old.
You told me you were not ready
to paint the autumn gardens or do cartwheels
over a cliff. The hope that bled
from your belly, and the seas
of men's and women's breasts that
you floated through, like Adam awakened
from paradise, hungering for that one, strong connection,
was like me in the winters of my adolescent youth,
was the India I never visited or the Russian squares
I buried my imagination in.

I am red as cinnamon candy, hoping you'll have me
like the first day our hands joined and the bells of trinity sang
a melody to finally, resolutely live for.

Within This Hour

I needed you like someone hunted,
strumming my fear on the stems of weeds.
I crept like a lizard through
cornfields and rainforests
waiting for your evasive eyes
to wake and summon me near your mystery.
A hundred days and a hundred
painted houses appalled me
with their good appearance.
All the waste of yellow maggots
infesting the phone, on the lips
of the viral public, demanded from me
a beauty I could never give.
My tent is dark
like inside the throat.
The blue kisses of disgrace that soak
my cheek seem to fall upon me like a web.
I felt a dead thing circle my waist
when duty made me his. I felt such peace,
a poisonous seed, and I need you
though my sense of curiosity wanes
and I am neither fearless nor brave.

Falling

But one belief, one knowing
that absorbs every desire into
its invisible womb. Simple
like a good taste on the tongue.
Perfect as heaven in the eyes.
But one brave surrender, to open
every book and turn on all the lights.
One mind graced with trusting,
sure of the warmth surrounding and of
tenderness in every destroyed hope.
More real than the corners of a table
or the crisp red of a rose.
More real than the shingles on rooftops
or the touch of a spider's web.
But the one thing unalterable, stronger
than death, than change, than the broken heart.
But one thing to give up all else,
where disappointments, fantasies and greed
melt like candyfloss in the mouth,
and time is the gift given to learn
the infinite dimensions of love.

Replenished

Whenever roused with grief
or shaken by the cynic's cry,
I feed on your words and warmth
then wonder why I stood so long
held by the darkened grip.

For in your subtle bend
and caressing voice,
the rain is petty, as are all the
drunk and desolate things that
send my spirit heaving.

Whenever lost
in the crushing swirl
where sick and mindless crowds
roam, I draw up your face
from my memory's well and
am eased, believing once again
through fear and disappointment.

The Voice That Calls To Me

The voice that calls me to the dazzling edge
is the voice I heard when still in hunger,
deep in donut shops, in cigarettes and unbleached sorrow.

The voice that calls me, comes again,
bursting in my belly, digging a hole
through all my prayers, comes
like an elephant, intelligent and crushing
my marrow with its grey mass.

The voice that calls me, I know
like I know certain streets of this city,
dressed in melancholic remembrances,
shedding their newness to rekindle those
unhappy, yet coveted years.

The voice that calls me beats on my limbs
like hail. As if holding my head between clammy palms,
it holds my thoughts in old habit, in damp, penetrating
gloom.

I begin this time
hearing its vinegar scream inside.
It drips like cold gravy down my spine
down, between shoulder-blades, down
covering the small of my back.

The voice that calls me, I hear rise
from the gutter of my past.
I let it come and go. For though
here and hooked to my mind, it is only
the passing of a cloud, only
a long-told story, a coming-back before
moving on.

You Were There

I thought of you
when the stones were thrown
from prairie ground.
I called to you in mornings,
weak with doubt and faced
by terrible extremes.
I ran to you when in the quiet of my room,
the walls oozed unloving shadows
and my heart could find no connection.
I talked to you in restaurants, in words
I dare never reuse.
I found you in my breadbox
and in the eyes of my enemy.
I want you though my wanting is broken
by distraction and gnarled by blunt fear,
but wanting and wanting
your hand on my shoulder
and your voice for all time
(subtle or strong) pressed
within my breathing air.

In The Tomb

In the hollow of despair
where bitterness sways from
desperation to self-destruction
and beetles crawl across bathroom
floors on bathroom towels, fearless
as those who have faced and conquered death,
pain and fantasy consume and God
is but a word to mutter to soothe the cut-up skin.

In a night alone with the TV off and all
books read, with tomorrow inevitable as the sun
that will rise, spring blossoms that too will fall
and be crushed by the wheels of cars - pretty white
and purple stains on the pavement - sealed in my mind
like images of dead bodies in a row.

In bed, with no lover to cry to or hide inside
two devoted arms, my heart speeds like fire
through a dry forest - undresses, unveiling
its vulnerable beginnings.

And there, there is something that shifts
like incense lit or like a cat nudging the hand,
something subtle that whispers "hello".
And my head is raised, looking
with new-born eyes at a familiar place.

Without Light

In naked bitterness
all strangled dreams lie
like wings ripped from
an angel's shoulder, icy,
slim as a sword.

The floor is
hideous that binds us to
reality, to the leopard and
the scorpion, unto the
barren future.

Each bedmate is
sick with isolation,
reaching across the insipid night
to coin his wounds and lie for
once, unalone.

God is lost in the morass of hurt,
and each oracle is a trick
that consoles for a minute
then purges the heart of hope.

Delight comes
with food, with the purchase of a passion
from the local convenience store.

Our thirst is a dreadful ooze,
like lust, it kills though itself never dies.

We cling to the scorching seed,
pray for grace through a tired eye.

The Irish clover droops,
and from the quiet fields, soldiers carry
fragments of mutilated truth,
like they would a dying paramour.

To Lie With Luck Again

To lie with luck again
in the vital centre
where faith is had
like water - necessary and
always there.

To speak to the familiar morning
in my own tongue that I learned
from solitude and watching squirrels.

To step on the back of a scorpion,
not feeling its tail writhe and crush.

To hold a nickel in my hand
and let it be enough.

To walk on tall grass and leave
my mark.

To not be the fig tree holding back
my bloom, or look on others as poison to my tastebuds
or as a slingshot to the singing lark.

To dance as a child, unaware
of the mirror, catching on fire
like a deer in powerful flight.

Dark Wave

The dark wave comes
through your sandy hair
and meets the green of your eyes.

It has you with its hunger
and the slow and low way you talk,
unconcerned with morality. It scents your mind
with its long-lived indifference,
while underneath self-contempt
feeds the coldness of your skin
and lets you live in violent chambers
where death and imagination merge to form
your every-day apparel.

You long for comfort like a man stranded
in the wilderness longs for a safe
and empty cave. You never trust the tenderness
of your desires nor bend to the cleansing slate
of self-forgiveness.

The dark wave comes
from ancient tombs
and memories that will never
escape you. It comes
into your arms,
and even hating it, you embrace it
as though it were the only thing
to call your very own.

The Ghosts Around My Bed

**I sleep my sleep hapless,
aching with each vision
housed and saved.**

**I die my death silently,
leaning further into the dull air,
seeing twice my desires perish
in the stillness of this doldrum eve.**

**I love my love lonely,
planting stones in the sink,
washing dishes at midnight.**

**I am tired of hope and of prayer,
tonight, I am a white mouse
drowning in an ocean of snow. I am lassoed,
trapped in litterbox-rooms. My toenails
are cracked and somewhere soon children
will wake energetically and rise,
believing.**

Home

In this sanctuary of cats, guitars and clay,
words descend from white clouds
bringing us breath through the window pane.

In this home of perfect love
and hardwood floors, strong angels
lean against every door, conversing
with playful ease amongst themselves.

In these rooms we curl together
until we feel an alternate, inseparable beating.
The ceilings are covered in cobwebs
like birthday string, and our bed
is a cavern for miraculous dreams.

In this happy corner, we have been given
a space in time to mould into our own,
where there is no protection and no facades,
where laughter rolls like tears do as soon
as the movement hits, and the day's brightness
pours in at 10 am, telling us in this genesis season
that all is here and all is good.

My Love is Waiting

**In the bald winter
where only the cold grows,
my love is waiting.
Strands of sorrow like
straw stream from his fingertips,
and his clothes are the shade of indigo,
resurrected by his constant desire.
Clouds clear at his feet and coffee is poured
on his behalf whenever his hands need warming.
He is sheltered in the alleyway garages, takes his cue
from the pigeons. His legs are long,
like candlesticks they stretch across January streets.
My love is waiting for the blanket of my flesh, waiting
to salt his emptiness with my touch.
He watches from the balconies.
He is mad, ruled by the erratic radiance of music.
He is waiting on the branches of the elm,
waiting for the night to clear,
waiting for my heart to open and claim him
like a birthmark.**

Without Covers

Because of lips
perfectly full and pulsing,
and hair, black and living like
sea creatures fathoms below that swirl
their strong bodies through the thick dark,
I knelt next to your tallness
and placed my hands in the centre
of your torso. Like feminine blood
your muscles moved, shivering with touch.
Your man's heart rocked, unconscious
of every thought, and night became for us
a different thing. Came in the colours
of coral reef flowers, came like wet moss
in the hand, came like swallowing
a falling star, like paint dripping through the hair,
as our two bodies merged. And as your thin neck
turned, our closed eyes saw together every
abstract condition collapse, in the flow
of undulating flesh, in the broken frame
of one another's mortal love.

The Gift

In love like the buffalo is with
its herd, like the fingers with the
hand, like the fish with its translucent tail.
One dish I swallowed of hope
and resurrection. One morning
I held his rock that crushed all other
rocks before. I crawled to the edge
he asked, and understood eternity.
One morning he rippled inside me
like a living storm, and I knew love like food.
My hunger was beaten by his picnic.
The pond that was his cup,
drenched my being in the tender flesh of God.
For one morning I found my good soil,
and I will live for always now,
cleaving close, like to a first kiss,
that graced filled day.

Through the thick middle

where creepy things slither

Forgiveness,

is not red nor shades of brown,

but is sea-water blue

with an underbelly dense with life,

with squid, sharks and fluorescent jellyfish.

It is not rage, but a seeping dissatisfaction

that hooks my joints and sends me

screaming.

And love,

it is in his wet hair, in his angry,

suffering brow. It is in his sad voice

on the phone, in his complex humour and primal body

I touch, but cannot hold.

A Day For My Own

The darning of socks in
summertime. The filing of nails
on a nothing-to-do night -
with all desires nourished.
I see a can of peaches open, the laundry washed
and windows everywhere, letting in
the outdoors.
I feel my pulse calm,
feel almond shells around my feet
and the fires of anxiety appeased.
Like holding the hand of a friend in need
or running through a valley with a dog
who can't be seen, my eyes are strong
with imagination. They blend
with the October leaves and lap-up
visions of children playing
where willow trees so easily grow.

Whole

Sing, for love is in his astounding
form and mind that welcomes the intricate unknown.
In his touch are the things of wings and
a leopard's elusive step.

Sing for his heart is a cavern where
mysteries are kept, where my lineage begins
and the mirror is no more.

Sing, for the sensual stomach, for the
timelessness of impassioned blood.

Sing, for the connecting limbs, for the
instinctual rhythm inside that joins us higher,
together at the deepest core.

Morning

The sun on garage roofs
 gives the gull a warm winter's
bed. The leafless tree that meditates
 so glorious against the sky,
 is witness to a household of grief and joy.
The book that sits on top of the television
has carried over a million souls through,
 and morning is on my toetips like
a ballet dancer's favourite shoes.
 On the wayside of the road a small
toad has found its grave, as the sewer drain
gurgles an indifferent refrain.
 Tiny things congregate and share
 their food as young women walk
with their pleated skirts, readying children for school.

Things I Must Learn

To speak like I should
in the wayfaring night, to
hold your hand when the shelf cracks
and the books are all read, when the fridge
carries only last week's fruit.

To lean my head on your heart and
let you speak your need, instead of curling
under the blankets like an angry, disturbed thing.

To kiss your lips when nothing is going on, when
the dried flowers crumble to the floor and
the guitar strings have snapped, when summer
is only a month away and the city prepares in the same
dull way.

To touch your arm when the shower curtain rips
and a spider's eggs lay behind the bathroom mirror.

To be kinder than I've been,
to wrap a hand around the back of your cold,
delicate neck.

To take pictures of you
in the afternoon, loving you better
when darkness inevitably descends.

New Commitment

In the wilderness of my dreams,
never shining a colour I could own
as a bluejay, its feathers.
How many worlds must I enter
to peel away to the light?
How to gather sand and build a rock?
And at night,
even love's generosity
is not so glorious,
even happiness cancels out
a great intensity.
I think strength means
knowing how to suffer
properly.
Strip me of this darkness and
let me lean against a beating chest.
I am not to be scattered like a weakling seed
or tossed from shoulder to shoulder
like a child without a home.
In the solid middle I will dive,
driving away my rage and the stuff
of distraction that devours
the better workings of my heart.

Spiral

I have gone before

on the phobic path

and in the shallow river.

And now this present

I make to the glorious clown:

A cup of music and a true and lonely cry.

Trapped in one life now, clear from

the beginning, like drawing the long

straw no matter the shape of a person's

lips. I sense the air above, between the outside

and me. I am not together. All of a sudden

I feel no shore, no happy bottom. I hope

to ring myself of worry, to do cartwheels

on train tracks and love the blistered foot.

I see the endless coil, the ebb and flow

of the salty tide. I am learning of ease,

learning to swallow the orange seed,

to rub shoulders with a new breed of hope

and open endings.

Dad (an eulogy)

*"My life was my peace, now,
in the moment of my release."*

Under here in the dark
deepest dream, the cold
loss, unbearable change,
I cry out blood. I have no
overcoat, no more protection.
It is now a different light I seek,
an alchemized marrow in my bones.
Do I sing, for death is peace,
and death is the edge that slices
the tongue in two, that drains the cup
of every drink? Home - I have lost
the essential tie. I have lived with a bond
so beautiful, now broken by fate and the blue-turning
cheek. How will I know my own grief,
the shattering that eclipses all but faith?

In the newspaper turning, I smell
your hairspray, I hear your boisterous voice.
I clasp in my hands the raw fire of nevermore.
Stand close to my mirror,
and help me breathe in and out,
help me take into my own
your generous heart.

I knelt before his photograph
on the casket and we talked
of gratitude and goodbyes. I saw
compassion's light, there, in
his dark tremendous eyes.
I felt the tearing off of seven layers of skin.
I held my hands together. Faith,
where is your shield? Your cradle
to rest my shattered spine? Each cell
is reformed by his departure. I am left
in the winter wind without clothing
or a protective tree.

Cut, the thin clouds
cut a pathway within
where loss is deep as God.
My fingers move like trains
back and forth. Ashes in an urn. Graveyard green
flavoured by tears.

I whisper to him when on the gravel road.
I see him beyond the fence, in the coming
December snows. I need him like before,
when hearing children talk, when waiting
for a terrible moment to pass. He formed a giving spirit,
rooted in integrity. Angels come and go,
hovering in my pocket books and on highways
I never cross. They touch the seagulls'
outgoing breath, they write his name
on Scarborough cliffs. I will not mourn
with unholy regrets, nor would I change
the tension in his nerves.

In closets, memories pile,
their scents and wooden colours
for years at rest in unchanged
shadowed hovels. I find myself
in unfamiliar rooms, emptied
of hope and the driven smile.
I find the walls pulsing, and the floor,
a bruised body I have cried for.
In years, this hot blood of loss
will thin and this tumour of unbuffered
pain will shrink and mend. In years, I will
see his picture and spend a Christmas under a pink sun.
November winds will wrap me in
a sweet and grateful slumber.

Hammered by a kaleidoscope of memories,
through the grand "if" and the willy-nilly
confines of love. Rifts in the pavement
I walk on today, still stunned by the enormous
and the unchangeable, still frightened of my thoughts
that go into the hard void, into the unfocused
stare and the image of him lying there,
no longer. Up & down craters beyond
this century's grasp, beyond the books
I've read and anguish before encountered.
He answers me in my head, wakes me at 2 am.
He protects me still, though his arms have bent
to the cold, unforgiving ash.

Appleseeds I'll never bury.
Evergreens lean towards the greying sky.
He is there like a shadow on my back, there
in the wheat-coloured grass.
He is over the city factories,
his face resides on graffiti walls.
And on telephone wires I see him sit
with the starlings, smell him in the scent
of evening rain. I hear his stories from
the beautiful lips of children. I think
I'll see him tomorrow again, know his
paternal warmth, the way his smile lifted
the corners of his mouth.
Time is drifting into the homes of strangers,
as death strides beside every dream
living, defiled or lost.
He surrounds me like the sounds of a streetcar
running, and I am running, struggling
to stop, lay down and to be reborn.

Ocean-cold and wooed by the tongues
of snakes. Miracles abound,
but still grief gnaws a pathway
through my torso. Trees are singing
of the flames I sleep in and the empty
days toss me to and fro, from heavy tears
to rage. How without him in the huge,
unpredictable world? How without his loud
and open gifts? Landscapes where centres break
and colours are no more. I touch the crocodile
tooth, the boiling point of all my bones.
So alone, coupled with the uncertain dark.

I miss his brown fiery eyes and how
he lived, pampering the hearts of others.
I miss him like I would my very skin, like the shell its yolk,
and the eyes, their vision - Where
is the cure? Where is the farewell
from this gruesome spell? The shock
still rivets in me. Crows spin through the clouds.
Death has been unleashed like the first feel of pain.

*Believe me, you have reached me. Believe me,
this enemy won't win. I will stand tall for you.
I will hold your hand until morning.*

Pale in the December sky,
the sun is but an insect's dream.
I leap from cabooses onto the icy tracks.
There are people in the playground,
happy that Christmas is near. There are
buildings with stained-glass windows,
reminding me of the aloneness we each are
bound to endure. Now my father, I wake to find
you hour upon hour at night. I talk to you
in half-conscious streams. In the afternoon,
I break down. Crows sit on my porch,
then follow me through the peopled-street
where I swear your shoes have travelled, once
in a bachelor's dream. And mother is all
sliced-up inside. Days and days we spend
looking at old photos, trying to dispel
her sorrow and devouring regrets.
My husband holds me like the best
of friends do. He carries me over

these desert fires. I want to tell you
how good was your influence, how soft
my aching eyes. I want to know you again
after I die, like you were in this life -
my strong, my steadfast guide.

Old factory fields in mid-December's light.
Vacant barns and rows of suburban homes.
You pushed me on the swing
and gave me courage to dive.
Sunsets in Spain and the sounds
of the typewriter at 4 am are now part
of my muscles and nerves - you are in me
like a fledgling in its nest or the drive
behind my every restless year. You knew
how the great dream fell, how rage can find
the form of forgiveness, and the bridge
between our two stubborn intensities.
You were my ally in the social sphere, my
guardian in the tower, my place of safety
and self-belief. You held me near
when the curtain opened, and my childhood
fastened to a ravenous storm.

I live in a room of brown-papered walls,
TV screens and empty teacups. I want
to give up like the hand that lets go
of the cliff or the orphaned boy
left on the streets alone. I'm trying
to keep my head steady, but no abstractions

relieve me, only pins and needles in my brain
and the intestinal twist that has found
its way within like a permanent companion.
People call, but only this empty dread
makes its bed in my heart.

I know it is over - the special way we needed
one another. I know I must take the road
to lead me on, past the dried flowers
and 1 pm breakdowns. Shakespeare at
the dinner table and omelettes in the
afternoons - I won't forget a single
kindness, the way you prayed
on that darkest day in my adolescent life.
Ceilings crack overhead. I knife
a million strangers. I curse the cars
going by and the cockroach on the kitchen
floor. There are no distractions from death.
There are no soothing things to do -
but to wait behind this cold and sealed door.

The cloven hoof of
this and that blood's pardon.
I feel the acorn hit,
the crossing of the Nile.
I feel like an Indian summer,
and all the sweat pouring into
the brass cup of mortal knowing.
Time, in time no love is broken,
not the pound pound pound of his
nature, not the be-all of his voice.
I will never hear that voice again,

not his loud centre ringing, his
male pride, gentle in the sun.
I will never carry his water again,
or tell him - I thank God
for you. For you and your quickened
energy, for the artery of your moral
gestures that gave with 'yes & no',
with 'wrong & right', the seed
of my shelter and the over-fair justice
I believed in all my childhood life.
I thank God for your walking sound,
how the room rebounded with your
surely presence, and the smile on
your eccentric face, there, when we talked
of a grandchild. I thank God for the breathing space
you gave, and the will to live out my tale.
I thank God for the hemisphere you made
and the beautiful passions you instilled
in my heart. I thank God for you -
my weight, the reason I write
my song.

If today the closed eye
takes me to where I've never
been before, if I meet my father
in the mirror or in a five & dime store,
would this pressure drain like the letting
of blood, would these horror-stricken
days mean nothing now but a bitter
tossed-away cup? If he moved through
a dream saying - Do not be afraid.
Do not let your mind fracture or your lips

turn blue - would I know him like
last month or meet him with raw wonder, anew?
The rings around my fingers.
The friends I cannot keep.

A month crushed
in the vortex of a python's circle.
Stale breath filling my atmosphere,
and hope is but soft warm sand
beneath the feet, is a season that
never fades, is not what my hands
can trace. I long for mornings
all to myself, to hear his voice
once more on the phone. But rocking chairs
and crossword puzzles rest vacant as
2 am streets. And birthday cakes are past
like an old person's dreams. He returns
again at night, alive for one more week.
Rain pours onto my teeth and
nutshells are gathered by the winter's
black and brindle squirrels.

With grace I may be replenished.
This dull anguish may be replaced
with starlight in my belly. Or with the
million winds of God's miraculous justice,
I may return to a little one the goodness
he gave, be offered the chance to feel
the kick, to know no stronger responsibility.
The same as he (with his stoic suffering

and gregarious generosity) plucked the weeds
from my journey's path and made me see
with moral clarity the fault of all but love -
so maybe I can be for one what he was for me.
Maybe soon my turn will come.

Before I knew my own face
in the reflection, I saw
sparrows rolling in the sand
and wished my heart open as the underpass
cars travel through. Before I knew of death
and its yellow-green smile. I offered
caramel-coated apples and chocolate bars
to placate it. But now I stand
beside its smelly aftermath. I feel
its wrenching voice fill my solitude,
and all the mad children of this and
other worlds echo their hell beneath
my many scarves and sweaters, touching
me nude with their growing black hole.
And soon I am just darkness with no size,
no boundaries or vision of outside. Soon
I am embittered by friendships I thought
I had, and mountains of rage churn like
spoilt food in my belly. I am sad too, like
the willow tree in my Montreal backyard.
Sad like my father when his mother died,
and his orphan cry lied sealed inside
like a voiceless fear. Because now he

is gone and things I often waited for
will never pass. No "Owl & The pussycat"
for my children's ears, no more pride in
his sideways smile, or trips to India
or English moors. He will never know
my children's names.

Pigeons flock through the fog,
high above the park benches and lamp posts.
Guilt has no shore, but is an endless
sea where jellyfish and stingrays
make their nests and the dolphin
is no more. Our talks by the fireside
will never be again, or his drifting
to sleep on the couch in the winter's
after-midnight air. On Christmas eve,
all my memories are soaked into
the tree's red and blue lights. And Grandma
is gone, as well as the dog beside me.
But worst is the emptiness of his vanishing,
is the click click inside my throat
and the razor-burn on my knees. Kneel and pray,
for life is nothing but this and that thing done,
is the touching of two hearts
and the softening of brittle ways, is to keep
the soul's challenge forefront, then to sing
around the merry table of relatives and friends,
as if immune to bitter unbelief and fear
that drives the nail inward. He is
on the windowsill looking in,
reminding me that long ago

our once colliding spirits
made the greatest of amends.

Waves of snow outside the window,
moving like pure isolation, cleansing all
with its cold fury. Last night
I hugged him in a short farewell in my head,
in the blue fog of a dream. And waking
I found peace in January calling. Outside
a city hawk circled, blessing me and mine
with its instinct so talon-strong and
close to God. Families I never knew
have opened my heart. Barnyards and lithe trees,
stretch toward the silver sun. I miss him
at the dinner table and when the wine is served,
when all the things of hopes and wonders
implode within. Into the scent of dried rose petals
death dives with mad glee. Water-towers
cut a hole through eternity. The wrinkled word
I cannot speak. The keepsakes (like hot wax
pouring onto my belly) cause a redness
that releases my broken-heart's moan. And hanging,
- my flesh, my guilt, my grief -
now and forever merged, undeniably atoned.

In the Gully of Things

In the throat of things,
monotony pulses in every
strand of seeped-through light,
where crumpled-up paper is all
to ease your fall.

In the orange belly of deliverance,
in the blue fantasies of school kids,
now is not a time to relish in,
is something to be transported from,
and your sandals are torn like
a piece of skin.

In the bedroom against the unwashed wall,
in the other rooms where spirits
pace the hardwood floors,
your eyes are dim with death,
and the answering machine is broken.

In the book you read,
in your tight, unclean jeans,
your faith has failed, and you ask
for it back, as the cars going by fill your mind
with a strange, distracting wonder.

Open

Open like hell is opened
to the damned, like the heart
collapsed in on itself
or like being three nights
without sleep, in a room
of false friends.

Open with the wide smile
in your pocket, with layers
of socks to cover your wounded toes.

Open as a modern kiss, as
a dream in need of interpretation.

Open, though hiding would be nice,
and under the books on the shelf
is a message written in dust, uncovered.
It is telling you the change has come:
Your stomach is full of restlessness.
Your eyes are new with a strange indifference.
The change has come.

Open like a woman in labour,
or like a butterfly caught inside a storm.

Friendship

With the loyal blood of friendship
I sing of one who has not betrayed.
I am wrapped in the distance of time
and space, but talk through
telephone wires to her brave
mind. We speak of things that
challenge our blindness and deepest core.
We throw light down the chimney
and braid the strings of our attachment.
In tragic bodily curse she discovers
the way to see. She knocks self-pity
to its knees and praises the mosquitoes going by.
She embraces her trials as good gifts,
though hurting like a simple child.
We have held the flag that divides
the foreigner from the native. We have let go.
These are things we have learned like a dandelion
stretches naturally towards the sun, like a fledgling
knows its mother's private tune.
I am happy to call this blessing mine, to know
so strong a seed sprout and bloom in spite
of our incompatible roots.

Like a harmonica

playing
from a far off place,
like a storm in warning under
a clear and windless sky,
like the smell of food when
both fridge and pockets are empty,
change arrives and pulls each
limb from its socket, plucks the
head-hairs, until a new appearance
forms and the body lies on its deathbed,
unable to stand. Then like sunshine
on the windowpane or like a blank page
in a room without furniture, a face arises
newly formed, clothes fill the closets
that were never seen before.
The hands throb raw with anticipation.
Then lifted from the lava pouring, lifted
into a warm communion, strength pulses in
the fingertips and in the eyes, all meaning
is rejoined and the heart is freed
to finally bless and fully cry.

Pregnant After a Death

I kneel for you, for the small
flower unnamed. Within
where apple trees never grow, another
fire catches. I dream of toadstools
and my father's dark warm eyes. I call
you my literature, my sweetest harvest.
And my husband and I, we make notes
in the mirror, we go shopping, holding hands.
We talk of you like a morning glory, we smell the spring
and are proud. We begin to know you
like a separate constellation, like someone
entwined by all these loving riches.
God has taken and now gives, letting
the tears and this blessing take equal hold.

Imagination

In the drawer
my love is folded
like playing cards.
I turn this over
and find myself lost
in the open space of possibilities.
Frightened by the hardness of being,
wanting this to go, along with the
pat on the back and good cheers of courage.
Wanting my pulse still for a moment
and all bloodties mended and forgiven.
In the books I read
I think myself a new person.
I am there, just after the French Revolution,
in the parlours and prisons. I am not
lonely, but freed of reproach, sending
a gift of light to all my enemies.

Bright

The brightest spot I ever found
has mended the knitted shroud,
has clipped the cloven hoof
and gave heat to the sunless sky.

The brightest warmth inside his eyes
has carried me over the burning meadow,
has placed my head on soft ground and made
the balm to ease my wounds.

The brightest gift that tore the veil
from my eyes, is tender as a cloud,
is sharp as a pelican's beak,
is the nucleus substance and the tree's
great shadow.

The brightest love that works in us all
comforts me through each trial and chore,
is my laughter, my pear tree growing,
is the unlocking of the latch
to every knocked-upon door.

Transfigured

Each day I wear my grief
like metal mesh. I see you
as a spirit burdened to speak.
You try to comfort this field
of wounds. You tend the amputees
and bound the screaming with soft song.
But it is hard for you to stay,
to not let go completely into the light.
I let you go. I make this year my bridge.
Though my heart has ruptured and cannot heal,
and I am forever overcome with this sadness
of our love silenced by brutal, unnamable death,
I will build a new house, dive with both hands
into my yard until the evergreens grow.
I will contain you as more than memory -
in my harvest will bloom many sunflowers
of your great generosity. And your fiery blood
will sprout the roots and flesh of passion fruit.
The maple tree will grow large like you, protecting all
within its strong and tender shadow. And children
will be drawn to this yard, to play there amongst
the tall dramatic grass, and then sit still to watch
with wonder the many shades of sky, reflecting
the warmth of your paternal sun-setting colours.

In My Bones

Death makes a brother and sister
of us all, shedding the crusty scales
of protection and vanity, it lifts
each heart bare toward the scorching
sun. And I feel so different now,
as though my wardrobe has been replaced
with someone else's colours,
as though I have joined hands with the earth
in all her potent grief and glory.
I feel so well contained, though raw
as newborn babe. I feel this knowing
has made me whole, though it has removed
the ground I once stood on.
And here I see the space within will never go,
and the tears will be forever near. I see
the miracle of death, like the forming
of a caterpillar's tight cocoon.
I see May flowers begin to bloom,
and know now, that life is not
so long a thing.

My Place

At one end are the setting shapes
of friendships left behind
like the breaking of a mug
or a foggy window.
I leave that end and hold no other.
I stand on the crust of a sandy shore.
Together I swam through the salty flavour
with a dolphin by my side. Alone,
I leave my companion and the waves
that serve me no more.
There are things I wish for like
pineapple and starfish fruit. There are
times I believe in the hot sands, believe
in the beautiful face of loneliness. I wave
at the birds and they follow me. I lay still
and the air has filled my thirst. On the
grassy green beyond I know one day I will
move. I know of proud children smiling at the
stars. I know there is nothing that can kill
the large immaculate Love. I died with my flesh.
I am born a new way, cut off from last-year's persona.
I look to the water - its depths
no longer take me in, its blue is but a shallow tone.
I close my eyes
and rains descend like an artist's stroke,
making patterns on the naked land.

I Found You Singing

**I found you singing
tight, beneath my skin
like an armful of swallows
or an oak tree conversing with
a squirrel.
I found you pushing your foot
against my ribs when dinner
was late and hope wore thin.
I found you like I found no other,
there, from where no science
can explain, formed with intricate
splendour - a face, a being, a soul
a part of, though unique from my own.
I found you when I was on the sofa-chair
excited to hear your father's voice,
needing us both from behind the curtain,
somersaulting in your liquid sphere.
I found you after my father's death,
not sure of my strength to carry this through.
But now you are in me, and I am rocked again
like a butterfly's wings are rocked
by the summer wind, caressed
by the mystery and miracle of all dreams
so very beautiful.**

Recovered

The light that fell in the fish's
mouth was a light that came loose
from the predator's paw.
And a thousand moons have died
like the blue whale and the harp.
Since then I have been surrounded
by a dryness that killed my ferns and the
tender, drooping lily. In summer, the
ghost is the future and the bride is
the first one sleeping. I called in my skin
to the humming river. I wanted my darkness
to dance and faith to run through me like
the smell of peppermint leaves.
This was the thing asked for. This was the thing
received. Grace nestled between the joints
of two extremes, and lucky was my drink.
I believe in you - the fire is your smile,
and the soft infant underfoot is your heart and seed.
I have felt a flicker of your shape in a Spanish sunset
and in my father's last goodbye.
Sometimes I am a skeleton, other times, only flesh.
But today I remember the bounty
of all my journeys, and I love you. I am amazed.

Silence

I lift the bullfrog from the waters.
Bread, parables and staying close to a legend -
these are things of joy. I am thinking of the grave
near the willow tree, whose roots have grown
around the coffin, and of a sailing ship
that has no home port, but drifts like
a hollow log on living waters.
Freely I made my room and closed the door.
I knelt for our starved country, and grief
wrapped around my sleep, landing safely in my arms.
My father, I dream of your flame. I miss the woods
and your kind goodbyes. Tomorrow is a keyhole
that shapes my hopes with tiny possibilities.
If I could rise like grass from dirt, then
my nerves would be brave and the smell of the sun
would heal me with prayers.
If my eyes were an ocean where the whale
and the seahorse gathered, then I could see mercy
in the shark's primitive teeth, I would
lie on the surface of a wave,
catching the colours of dusk with
my out-stretched tongue.

Like A Wave

In the obscure attempts
to do more than survive, tomorrow is but
a wishing well where all the fish
have turned belly-up.
But the journey down is sacred,
more like flying than falling,
reflecting like a crystal its rainbow colours.
Into my 30's like out of a war zone,
saying goodbye to the dead and amputees.
Fresh is the light, though I carry on a string
a grey cloud of memories.
Love is never a metaphor, though it
recognizes itself in infinite ways.
It is a servant of the living,
mutable as sound.
How do I tell the thing
that is brittle from the thing that is brave?
In sorrow, I left the highway to find a home.
I found a tenderness and left my shell abandoned.
Beauty is curved like the wave of a rapid river.
It carries me to a path of bread and struggling purity.

In This Garden

I stir from the motionless depths,
coming close to the new face
that wants to be my own.
Harsh like light to the sleeping eye,
my roots are torn and my seed
is yet of the earth.
I reach back and then beyond -
all my poems are with me now,
the accumulation of my dance,
the rejoicing, and the coldness of loss.
Around - so close to the daylight.
If I had lived before, then now I am thrown
behind the door where eternity, not life abides.
Mortal year that has replaced my air
with this huffing and bewilderment -
how strong was the wave that has washed me over.
There are great things to come, though death
has forever changed the shape of my smile.

before

This child will come
like the spinning of a maypole -
strong colours entwined
and all her blood in unison
with the sun.
She will be a glorious bird,
sure of her place on this earth,
sure of the love that moves from
each breathing lung to the unseen stars,
tied to it all like water is to the shore,
like a night breeze coming to soothe
the summer day's scorch.
She will be set free by her heart's
irregular beat, unique in her beauty and
in her strength.
This child will come, welcomed
like a prayed-for dream.
We will hold her and know her -
our highest visions united then separated
into an infant being.

The Gentle Seed

The gentle seed
has changed face and made
its being heard.
Thickened veins, oversized
breasts and hands that no longer sing
are reflections of the pulsing heart
of one who has not learned
the ways of the human cry.
No voice but the kick and turn, but
a destiny yet to begin.

The gentle seed
that has grown within me
is like candy on the tongue,
like fruit to the green insects and
spring to the marigold, is a no-turning-back
and a waiting-to-behold.

The gentle seed
that will forever be part of my own,
has turned death on its side,
showing me peace in the remains
of my burnt garden.

As One

In the empty spaces I wait
for you, for my own being to
bend again towards your beating chest.
And sorrow like a grey October morn
stretches between us, leaves us each
alone watching out the same window.
We are locked like the shore to the sea,
perfectly different and merging in natural
rhythm - each shell and struggling fish
exposed, until we hide in separate elements,
bonded to our own. I follow your footsteps
in my mind, then kiss your shoes for speaking.
You turn on the tape recorder and commune
with the clouds. Often I have held in my breath
and ignored the ache in my throat. I have loved you
without giving - under blankets, more at ease
with the coming of private sleep than with trying.
Often I am bruised by your laughter,
counting pennies on the table with fierce concentration.
Though you with your hands,
hold all the mystery my heart can fathom,
pressing with gentleness my folded brow,
or blending your legs with mine, sure and warm
as the summer earth.

Of Fears and Thankfulness

Lines of dreams.
Inside the dream
I hold us close
though fear the passing
of our smiles.
Soon it will be like yesterday
never was, like all our
waiting and despair will be only
a mild memory left behind.
Soon you will be proud of your life
and know the taste of mercy in all
its natural splendour.
And I myself, with child, with you,
want us only to remain as close as
these nine years have brought us,
blending as a black cat with the darkness.
And though we both have lost irreplaceable loves,
both have felt the thunderbolt of death, on our knees,
beneath God's greatness, there will be only sunshine
for a while, a coming out with sorrow in one hand
and beautiful faith in the other. I see the plan:

We will welcome in
the good change and move into the future
like two inseparable fireflies, each dependent
on the other's flickering light.

On the bed

You lie on the bed like a Rodin
sculpture, body so perfect as the
first day we met, when finding
you was like finding a new way to breathe,
was a miracle that took time getting used to.
We talk for hours to our child within me
and wait for the change to arrive.
I never grow tired of our kissing or
of the depths we reach looking into each
other's eyes.
You have walked me through the dungeon,
held me close when my paint dried out.
We have stood as one as this new life grows
inside. Our voices now are solidified and merged
like the spring-Earth
in all her beautiful poetry.

In The Fire

With blood I cried,
I cried for you,
for this knocking on my ribs
and for a loss like the formless
angels would know.
I cried with panting breath
and wanted this and all life to go
into the picture frame, away
from the 'very real'.
I held my knees and felt the humid
air encase me like a crushing prong.
You moved in violent spin,
making your presence known.
I felt my inadequacies and my ugliness
like cold metal pressed against my throat.
I reached hysteria, then came out into the calm,
seeing my lover's eyes in the small space
between my fears. He took my hand and
I could breathe again. I could feel you were eased
and I heard a gentle whispering, saying
together as a family we three will live and grow.

Eight Months

This grief stalled in my throat
rises in small amounts
like a split seed moving from
earth to air.

I remember a warm protection
that I will never again know,
or see the fireworks of his grounded mind
fill the atmosphere with so much colour.
Time is like the moon in summer,
not so real when seen beside the day's strong sun.
But in winter, the moon is explanation -
is the weaving thread of barren understanding.
I think he must be near, after all
the wound still flows. Today eight months
have gone, and all my old hopes are altered
though renewed. I have nothing to give him,
no telephone declaration can I make in the passion
of true gratitude, or say why? to his passing shadow.
There is only this I am left with -
this sting of still raw shock, and all the memories
my love can hold.

BloodsuckerDeath

Embracing the bloodsucker
in naked sand, in the element
of rain and stormy skies.
Loving the bloodsucker for a moment
and then living within its inevitable stride.
A year of midnight, a cocoon to peer through,
but still the air is not my own.
Sleeping beside its warm and ruthless tummy,
who knows what the shadow beholds - the scythe,
the splitting apart, the lungs that find no breath.
I cared for your children,
I wrapped them like a necklace around my throat and
they taught me the infinite expressions of grief.
I was once a lake. I am now a dried-up pond.
The sweat is the seed, is the missing piece
that gives grace to every smile. Hunt me
no more, reveal to me the final plateau.
Loss and beautiful corpses, and still beyond
November's soil, you have revealed the ways
of indestructible love. For that I am grateful.
For love not you is absolute. This milestone you have given
has become my ship - now leave me to flow away
from the weight of this mourning.

Pregnant

The ringing bells,
the stone on high
that falls like a swan
with broken wings
are things that hound me
with a chill and send my peace reeling.
I wait for you under the arches -
May, June, July until November.
I am a silk sheet changing to a
woolly blanket - breasts and tummy large
like mother-icon, and the end is
a far way off. To meet your tiny eyes
is what contains me beyond the fear
of crazy labour and the pure moon
that swallowed my name. This is earth
finally, complete with no open edges.
Like another country's familiar animal are my
swollen ankles and weighted walk.
Sometimes I am bewitched by this declaration
of my mortal being and sometimes, trapped
in the change like a cat behind closed windows.
Will I be good to you, little one? Will it be
natural, our song and our rain? You come
without earned ugliness, wriggling inside.
We breathe as one, though still
to each other's heart and form we remain
as strangers.

Almost to the Other Side

In midair like a cold relentless
dream, the minnows find me
and tell me tales of insignificance.
In my blood there drifts a fool's
coin and fantastical wagers.
Because I am this person with
that hard year gone and this new
good gift to come, sometimes
it's as if I'm on stilts that with one small
trip, my whole body will come crashing down.
Sometimes I watch the cats and know
I have been made for this place, know
the colour of my sky and the heavy toll
of self-deception.

When the last tie is broken

**and no mentor remains to walk
my hands through the mystery of clay,
and I am hit again by another sorrow,
losing one who has guided my eyes into seeing
a new, irrevocable way,
then the day will expose my passion and test
its worthiness. Then I will be called to answer
on my own and believe in the truth of my dedication.**

**To shape, to shadow and the sensual magic
that is sometimes caught in timeless moments
oblivious to thought, like walking within
a beautiful breeze and smelling the life inside
all the tiny animals. Like being at the place where
water and earth are like fingers massaging mud
into a vision - a weight
unattainable to the cerebral mind.**

I still think of you

**in the morning,
when the winds play across telephone wires
and winter's trees.
I carry your face before me
like a sacred chalice, or a goal I cannot reach.
There are things that have changed me,
but the loss of you has split me wide like
never before. I see colours differently. I touch
icicles and give up all other truths. I believe
you are still protecting me, and then I am lost
in the greyness of the sky. Your love is torn
from my side. And now I am altered, I am
adjusted. I am a scorpion walking the desert
sands. I am a gazelle near the waterhole. One day
I am free, then the pain returns like cancer.
I am carrying a child. I am your child
who wishes you could share this journey. But
death has taken your hand. And somehow I know,
darkness is not all.**

At Sunrise

In dark peace
my covenant circles me
like a whale could a ship far at sea.
I am watched by a tender eye
greater than the Earth's orb.
And in the summer, renewal will come
though heat and smog will fill my lungs.
Hope I cannot define, but I feel its
footprint on my belly. I feel the treasures
I have been given like the meeting of a lost friend.
I have been understood, carried to the other side
of death's all-consuming void. I have talked
my journey through. My night has been named,
and in private gardens I have been shown
the anguish of love.

If We Are So Lucky

**If we are so lucky to know your face,
to touch your newly made skin,
to read to you in the mornings
and go walking in the afternoon . . .
If we can be complete under November winds,
maybe the hole my father's death
left within will heal, enough
so the sun won't pass me over.
In the hope of you and your perfect
dependency, we make meals at the counter,
lye together on the couch, touched by
vague expectation and awe. We are here
together at the throne of mystery.
Here, as my body stretches to welcome you.
If we are so blessed to smile into your eyes,
to hold you after midnight, then my father's voice
I could hear in waking wonder
as he says - be happy and carry on.**

Seeing Shadows

The light that enters
as a letting go
of what was once so beautiful,
illuminates the burnt and lifeless seeds,
says to the dark ache - I will love
I will love
with a new love that sees
each false pattern eclipsed,
that hears the moans of chipmunks
on park benches, that feels a sorrow
renewed with each inhaled breath, in
barbecue backyards and in the summer
approaching. Each month it burrows deeper
into the nerves. It is the light that hurts,
that drives the sight inward and uncovers
the shallow depths of certain intimacies.
Here it is, and will never leave, will be
the new shade of my eyes, the only purse I carry,
will answer me in my most desperate need,
and hold my hand through barren valleys.

Lifted

On my shoulder
I feel the weight of many years
being licked into oblivion.
I feel a new being being born
in my shoes. And in the bardo-crossing,
I have tasted the anguish
of change, have touched the
hot poker between palms.
I have cried in my confusion as love
came to clean the dirt in my hair, cut
my fears in two to swim in my belly
like tadpoles collected as a child.
The wind is in me and the apple seed sprouts
its fragile sapling. In my mind I see the world
as never before, see the wolves
as fractured, fragmented souls, sniffing
at my door. I see patterns in the air
holy as the sun. Dreams are believed into truth.
My breath has won.

Anniversary

Thick and frantic rapids
moved us to believe
that the natural law is sensual.
We walked to islands of
greeny coverage, placed our
hands together and eyed the
circling hawk.
We watched the rocks
with their majestic edges and strange white
colours as the water cupped them in its
thin transparent palms, promising to awaken
a memory of primal wonder.
The gulls speckled the cliffs as the
red-winged bird remembered its song.
We stood and stared at the heavy
waters falling, and in its thunderous
movement, we joined - contained
by our true love.

A Month Before Birth

Prepared to swing the branches,
steady like in days of another year,
when time was mine to pull apart,
to drive depression from my sphere.
But bluish grey is all I see through
these pregnant eyes. I see a change I cannot
cope with, and separation between those I love.
I see my dead father in every footstep and
wish to fade like the autumn leaves
into colours of gold and fire before I become
the earth's seasonal meat, before I am
further gone down the road of inevitable fate
where I lose over and over the letters of my name,
where my core is chipped and isolation
is my sole companion.
I don't see how the clock can turn or how I
can be stronger yet against this undertow.
But I bend and bend, and have not
broken, and soon
a child will come.

Autumn

Throw in the towel.

Throw in the left side of your brain.

Remember now to speak against
the polliwogs infiltrating your dreams.

A dozen ships have sunk under the banner
of righteous revenge. Still, people
are talking about the end, as if
such a thing was predictable.

The end will come but not with wings of fire
or because of the clocking of the millennium.

Children are new. Antelopes are running
unharvested fields. Death has no beauty, though
some will tell you different, some who have never
touched lips with Death or felt Its cold, eternal hold.

There are patterns in the fallen leaves that none but
the birds can know. Wait now for winter, for something
immaculate to cover up, then to renew, the old.

We Walk Again

**We walk again, becoming
the watery breath of lovers
touched by the same vision.**

**We feed our skins again
on the shifting flame
that burns all natural affliction.**

**We kiss again on home ground,
and do the things of togetherness,
full of letters and sighs and the bones
of our ancestry.**

**We stand under the umbrella,
nearing the darkness but staying alive.**

**We release all secrets
drenched in the soft light
of a fluid and tender joy.**

In Preparation

Down is the way I carry
this new soul in my mouth,
like the weight of pure responsibility.
I am glued to nature, my laugh is
no longer mine but is the sound
of soil breaking beneath the plough.
I have been here alone for over eight months,
and it is heavy like an arm that has
fallen asleep. It is good in so many ways -
a vision completing itself, like the brushing
of wet hair in the sun.
The bulk of this tiny being in my belly
is the paradox that lifts and roots at once,
is the dancing of the spirit in the earth's
thick mud. The crib is waiting for her weight.
Her father dreams of her sweet mouth and eyes. Fragile
as the essence of flesh, she has wooed me with
her kicks and turn, with her yawns through
the ultrasound shade
and the scratching of her cheek.
Soon we will see her and all her beautiful colours.
I begin to be overwhelmed. I am gathering my
childhood jewels, gathering
all my totems to meet the unveiled gaze
of her glory.

Without Hunger

I shed the skin of my appendages,
I call my name a song
and count each familiar note.
I found a friend under a chestnut tree,
needing time before declaring our bond.
I caressed a horse's upper lip
and loved him like my own.
On foot I travelled my life,
listening to secrets from the crows.
And love discovered me in the shape of a man.
In his burning depths he brought me home.
He is the flesh of my hand touching,
my waking eye and the dipping of my roots into
water. Together, we formed a child, blue
like twilight's blue, like the coat of a rippling river.
Together we come alive by her smile.
In a foreign wood the lilies bloom, the snows
of winter thawed, promises are kept and
the broken bones of passion are mended
like a piece of ancient art.

my child

**your skin alone is as soft as
a goldfish-back,
your smile is my last breath
and your lips puckered for cooing are
a glorious gain of candy apples.**

**We two are now three
merged in the depths
of touch and long stares.
In the trinity hug, we delight in
the smell of your fresh-washed hair.
We look into your navy eyes,
whispering words you can't understand.
We break the shell of just-us-two. You,
entering our sphere like a beautiful dream.
You, a gentle symphony that changes everything,
like the touching of the stuff of fairytales.**

Not a Ghost

Wide as the wind,
your spirit is around me.
I see your hands on books
and hear your voice as though
it were still your own.
I miss you again like the first day
when Death showed you its secrets.
I remember the love you gave, your
pride and your directness. I want to tell you
the things I have learned are not worth an ounce
of your lost affection, but still I have learned
to sail through this barren sea. I have learned
that I can. A year and half have past
and there is more time still to come.
I have feared this world without you,
but now I know because you were once here
the world will never be without you.
The sidewalks will forever hold your weight, others
will always speak your name with warm admiration,
and I myself am part of you. You are in me
like a main artery, a bloodline that fierce death
can neither dilute nor sever.

Break The Chain

Sealing in like a roof does
the house of age,
bitterness tells the time of all.
Like a toothy tiger in the greenery
blazing its look
from prey to prey, what the
years have let down flashes into the eyes
where love once reigned.
Throw the rock into the river and be fresh again.
I need to let go of the greed for security,
and trust the path I have chosen.
The caterpillar weaves then flies.
The infant wakes with a startled cry
then smiles when seeing a familiar face.
I will believe again in what voices mock.
Forgiveness renews and no one can
stop the night from ending.

When Sleep Will Not Come

The coldness behind too much pain.
The 4 am breakdown and the lost chance
of starting all over again.
Breathing is hard, is not what you expected
as a child when thinking of all the good things to come.
Empty screens and love eroded by bad circumstance.
A child, your child you wish you could do better for,
to take the anger from her home and let love be more.
But now there are the months of no-way-out and
so much thin hope to poke a finger through.
But now I want no affection, just an exit zone
where existence and accountability disappear.
There are bugs running up and down the strands of my hair.
My vision is blurred. My hands are like dried clumps of clay,
stiff and far too cold. My sandcastle has arrived, collapsed
and bagged at the foot of my door.

Spring

Caterpillars over the sensuous lawn.
Starlings in and out of clouds.
A man with a cane on his own
trailing the sidewalk curves.
Put-put-put goes the Earth's sorrow
as the ravaged instinct of humanity is
bundled up in winter's old furs.
Bending now to the sound of traffic.

*This is the miracle - that we never see it coming. The End
is always with us. It is the skin of existence,
it bleats inside
the food we ingest.*

A bug makes for the bush.
A dog is unsure of which master to please.
One man lies drunk on his front porch,
as the cherry trees are starting to blossom.

Our Little Pushkin

In the mornings I watch
your sleeping face like
a chinadoll's, perfect in every way.
I see your smile when you awake
like I would a waterfall on my street corner.
I see you curled tight with joy,
and flinch at the noon day sun.
When I hold you to feed, and you talk to me
with playful glee, I love you more than
my heart can carry.
I think this blessing is stronger than death,
strong like an acorn tree growing.
All night you rest on a pillow in my arms,
we play with bright coloured dangling things,
and your navy eyes open wide
as your legs begin dancing.
You watch and watch like a Buddha in disguise,
taking in life with a calm and thoughtful presence.
You are the spring's first butterfly, an owl on my shoulder.
You are wonder incarnate, freely showing
what grows so beautiful inside of you.

Breaking Through

The layer above me is thin.
Above, there are levels transparent
and endless. I hold my breath.
I use the force of arms and legs to swim
up like a tulip pushes out of the earth.
I fear the sharks. I fear the lack
of oxygen. Layer upon liquid layer I merge with
then pass through. When I reach
the last layer it is like any other until
I am through. And there is the crisp, immaculate sky,
the breathable breeze and friends sent
to rescue me, cheering like children at my return.
I am swept between them back to shore,
as the ocean sits like a picture, still and of
another time.

Stale Goodbye

From the caverns
of this and that belief
I am pulled like from
a dream into waking.
One seeing locked into
the pattern of my mind
like true love is locked, singular
and for all time.
The dead have been resting on
my shoulder, speaking tales
of living frailty. Lost beside
the morning. I have taken more
than I ever thought I could.
There is no wiping my slate clean,
no way to shed the scars
or forget his great presence
that guided the depths of my own.

In the centre

**there is the blindness of the salamander
born without eyes, there is the knowing of old age
that the end must come soon and when it does, the hope
that it arrives like a gift.**

**In the centre a frog goes swimming
and people continue with the day.
There is no stopping of time, no one to lift your hurt
and make it one with their own.**

**In the centre, it is equal on either side
and all the windows are open, inviting -
a space, the place
before a dream comes true.**

**In the centre where the crisis is over though
the relief is still beyond grasp,
there is this, the surety of only one thing,
in the centre, standing.**

Sweet

Her skin is like a morning maple,
painted by the day's first sun.
Her eyes are cradled in the ocean's centre,
blue as twilight's water.
Her laughter is faint but glorious as
a baby rabbit.
And she needs me through the night, beside
me like a thirsty flower.
She is old, a soul of many gatherings.
She is a dancing swallow, a strong and steady creation.
Like her father, she is made of nameless folds,
full of terrible and tender mysteries.
On a November night she was born,
altering the Earth's air with her first cry.

A Moment of Clarity

I dreamt I met you by the river,
washing your hair under the Jordan sun.
I dreamt you looked like no extraordinary man,
as those around you shone.
When I said Yes to your common eyes, then
your beauty seized me like the touch
of God on my shoulder, then you made me yours.
It was either blindness or amplified sight,
with only faith first to stretch the distance.
It was a moment to be offended or to praise.
I dreamt you held my hand then sent me back
to a waking state. I dreamt in the dream
I offered my life to you. It was a decision. It was
liberating. But now on my couch writing these words,
the everyday distractions hit and I am not as pure
as in that dream when seeing you made it simple.

Daughter

Drum, drum
the drake of dreams
and heed the head that
knows it is blind
to all the mysteries.
My hand is here, my
hand to follow. I love your
cleft chin and your strange blue eyes.
I love your laughter at night.
Live like no other has lived.
For you are more than a kaleidoscope,
more than six months of hope and happy endings.
Thank you for arriving, for changing my view forever.
I watch your sleeping face
and feel a thousand souls merge behind your
soft skin. Every day is your birthday, when a new
part of you is revealed like the most beautiful of wonders.
Play with the ropes of many.
I am here, and will always be
yours in love.

The Road Has Chosen

I hear the whisper of change
rush around my bones.
I am called out of the personal
into the deep breath of release.
In my home a child's wonder is uncovered
and the rich lips of love are wide open.
I hold my cup and hold it out
to taste the river of freedom.
I swing around but the bird has vanished
and the sky is shaped like a long-suffering beast.
I am stepping on the skirt of yesterday.
The thread I cling to is thinning,
and yet I am suspended and still, the summer
presses on.
On the last day of this ghostly month
I will draw breath like the fox let loose
from its trap. I will be breaking the tide,
sinking no more near the frozen pine.

Of Manna and God

To let go of the addiction
eating away at my cupboards.
To sing tra-la-la in the face
of fate and fall at the feet
of the unknown is what
my blood calls for, is the
rock I must throw and is the
river to sink it in.
To bury the book in the cellar,
to take my number off the list
and crack a nut on the hardwood floor
is my chance for renewal,
is my stage of internal strife, where
two voices argue of opposing faiths,
and all the while my house is burning.

It is

**the state before the beginning
when the breath is about to be released
and faith is gaining speed.
It is the morning coffee cool enough
for the first sip, and the child's wakeful eyes.
It is the first smell of autumn and the lover's
anticipating skin.
It is the radio at midnight when the clutching claws
of awful Fate have been unarmed and the star
you wish upon is no longer a dying light.
It is where the enemy is blessed and all unspiritual fears
are let go. It is the shattering of a pattern.
It is the peace that comes when the heart
is softened and the arms are open,
trusting the life to be.**

What Is Good

Wonder. Wonder
gone to the birds
to feed with the little people
and the Friday harvest.

I know my vision and
know the unaligned vertebrae
and the horror of sinking under
the world's dubious sands.
Give me a gate that blesses my being,
let summer be gone.

Wonder. Wonder
bake me in the wonder
of a child's first year, and
a softer way of seeking.

A Matter of Risk

**I have believed more in the magic of the stars
than in God's miraculous hand.**

**I have buried my head in the inevitable pattern,
crossed channels with the whisperings of the devil
and put my money on the line.**

**Now I still sway, maiming my faith with fear.
I reach for the roots, then tug a leaf.
I stand tiptoe to see beyond the barrier of fate
and am left with the wall and difficult breathing.**

**I call out to be released consciously
from this dog-pit struggle.
I look beyond the future
into the circle.
I cry out
then open my eyes.**

A Day

She lies beside me,
wakes with bliss,
legs flailing as she grabs her father's chin.
Eating is not simple, is a process
of song and distraction. Her will is
like the river's tide when nearing the falls.
Sometimes she smiles with abandon,
nose crinkled and mouth wide, other times,
coy and half-made with lips adult-like
and meaningful. Her eyes are denim blue.
In the afternoon on the floor,
she raises her body on hands and toes.
She plays by herself with her xylophone
and toy car. When the day is waning
and the bathtub comes, she is nearing
the end of her resources. After splash time
and putting the cloth in the mouth,
when drying off she cries 'ma-ma'
working herself into hysterical sobs.
We hit the pillow, her between us
talking and exploring the sounds of her voice.
Then her father turns the lights out,
and she snuggles into me to nurse.
I kiss her forehead and feel our hearts full -
three kindred saplings
stroked by the night's June breeze.

An Infant

**An infant is like a wonderful stone
being shaped by the tide. An infant knows
nothing of solitude and does not believe
in the built-up hardness of
kindred blood. An infant is
the night, is the day, never hiding
its hymn and colours. An infant arrives
from both the nadir of the earth and the
zenith of the sky. An infant has the laughter
to change the most dismal of days,
and the softness of tiny symmetry in its moon-like
face - and fingers, each a little bird,
bringing joy by just being, moving
like dancers' thighs over a flaming sea.
An infant is the eye of the whale,
the beginning and the potential all in one.
An infant is of flesh and perfect trust,
needing nothing from tomorrow.**

All of these poems have been published and have appeared in: Oh! Magazine; vox poetica; Crash- a litzine; Exile; The Writer's Literary Muse; The Toronto Quarterly; Sprout; Poetry Nook; The Poetry Jar; Poems About Life; Subprimal Poetry Art; Boston Poetry Magazine; Poppy Road Review (magazine and 2013 anthology); Ann Arbor Review; Turk's Head Review; Poems About Life; Allegro Poetry Magazine; Nebo: A Literary Journal; Tower Journal; Indiana Voice Journal; Cyclamens and Swords; Indie Poets Indeed; Sentinel Literary Quarterly; Novelmasters; Creative Talents Unleashed; Black Mirror Magazine; SilverSpine Poetry Forum; Mechanical Medusa Poetry Forum; Minerva's Housecoat Writing Forum; Rasputin; Poetry Quarterly; Dark Blooms Literary Zine; The Miscreant; The Missing Slate; Rocket Boy Poetry Page; Think Pink; Medusa's Kitchen; Creek Side Writing Forum; Cavalcade of Stars; A New Ulster; Communicators League; Malevolent Pegasus Literary Zine; Grease Monkey Literary Forum; Green King Poems and Poetry Zine; winamop; Temporary Lunatic Literary Zine; Vine Figure Poetry Page; Literature Today; The Piker Press; Poetry Life & Times; TwitchFit Lit Writing Zine; The song is...; Gossamer Poetry Page; Eye On Life; Eskimo Pie; Chicago Record Magazine; Poetryrepairs; Duane's PoeTree; New Mystics; The Stray Branch; Scarlet Leaf Review

About the Author



Allison Grayhurst is a member of the League of Canadian Poets. Three of her poems were nominated for “Best of the Net” in 2015, and one eight-part story-poem was nominated for “Best of the Net” in 2017. She has over 1,125 poems published in more than 450 international journals and anthologies. Her book *Somewhere Falling* was published by Beach Holme Publishers, a Porcepic Book, in Vancouver in 1995. Since then she has published fifteen other books of poetry and six collections with Edge Unlimited Publishing. Prior to the publication of *Somewhere Falling* she had a poetry book published, *Common Dream*, and four chapbooks published by The Plowman. Her poetry chapbook *The River is Blind* was published by Ottawa publisher above/ground press December 2012. In 2014 her chapbook *Surrogate Dharma* was published by Kind of a Hurricane Press, Barometric Pressures Author Series. In 2015, her book *No Raft – No Ocean* was published by Scars Publications. More recently, her book *Make the Wind* was published in 2016 by Scars Publications. As well, her book *Trial and Witness – selected poems*, was published in 2016 by Creative Talents Unleashed (CTU Publishing Group).

Collaborating with Allison Grayhurst on the lyrics, Vancouver-based singer/songwriter/musician Diane Barbarash has transformed eight of Allison Grayhurst's poems into songs, creating a full album. "River – Songs from the poetry of Allison Grayhurst" released October 2017.

Allison Grayhurst is a vegan for the animals. She lives in Toronto with her family. She also sculpts, working with clay;
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“Allison Grayhurst’s poetry combines the depth and dark intensity of Sylvia Plath, the layered complex imagery of Dylan Thomas and the philosophical insights of Soren Kierkegaard, taking the reader on a fearless journey through the human condition, delving with honesty into death, grief, loss, faith, commitment, motherhood, and erotic love. Grayhurst intertwines a potent spirituality throughout her work so that each poem is not simply a statement or observation, but a revelation that demands the reader’s personal involvement. Grayhurst’s poetic genius is profound and evident. Her voice is uniquely authentic, undeniable in its dignified vulnerability as it is in its significance,” *Kyp Harness*, singer/songwriter, cartoonist, author of *Wigford Rememberies*, Nightwood Editions; www.kypharness.net

“Allison Grayhurst is the Queen of Catharsis. Her poems are like cathedrals witnessing and articulating in unflinching graphic detail the gritty angst and grief of life, while taking it to rare clarity, calm and comfort in an otherwise confusing world of deception, mediocrity and degradation. Allison Grayhurst takes the sludge of life, and with fearless sharpness of eye and heart she spins it free of maggots with the depth of honour and passion. Allison Grayhurst’s work is haunting, majestic and cleansing, often leaving one breathless in the wake of its intelligence, hope, faith and love amidst the muck of life. Many of Allison Grayhurst’s poems are simply masterpieces booming with thunderous insight begging to be in Bartlett’s Quotations, lines such as “I drink necessity’s authority.” Nothing is wishy-washy in the realm of Allison Grayhurst. Allison Grayhurst’s work is sustaining, enriching, and deepening for the soul to read... a light of sanity in the world. As a poet, Allison Grayhurst is a lighthouse of intelligent honour... indeed, intelligence rips through her work like white water,” *Taylor Jane Green*, BA, RIHR, CHT, Registered Spiritual Psychotherapist and author of *Swan Wheeler: A North American Mythology and The Rise of Eros*.

"Her poems read like the journal entries of a mystic – perhaps that what they are. They are abstract and vivid, like a dreamy manifestation of soul. This is the best way, in prose, one can describe the music which is ... the poetry of Allison Grayhurst," *Blaise Wigglesworth, Oh! Magazine: Ryerson's Arts and Culture Voice.*

"Grayhurst's poetry is a translucent, ethereal dream in which words push through the fog, always searching, struggling, and reaching for the powerful soul at its heart. Her work is vibrant and shockingly original," *Beach Holme Publishers.*

"Allison Grayhurst's poetry appears visceral, not for the faint of heart, and moves forward with a dynamism, with a frenetic pulse. If you seek the truth, the physical blood and bones, then, by all means, open the world into which we were all born," *Anne Burke, poet, regional representative for Alberta on the League of Canadian Poets' Council, and chair of the Feminist Caucus.*

"Read at your peril. You will never look at this world in quite the same way again. Your eye will instinctively search the sky for eagles and scan the dark earth for the slightest movement of smallest ant, your heart will reach for tall mountains, bathe in the most intimate of passions and in the grain and grit of our earth. Such is Allison Grayhurst. Such is her poetry," *Eric M. Vogt, poet and author.*

"Grayhurst is a great Canadian poet. All of Allison Grayhurst's poetry is original, sometimes startling, and more often than not, powerful. Anyone who loves modern poetry that does not follow the common path will find Grayhurst complex, insightful, and as good a poet as anyone writing in the world today. Grayhurst's poetry volumes are highly, highly recommended," *Tom Davis, poet, novelist and educator.*

“When I read Allison Grayhurst's poetry, I am compelled by the intensity and strength of her spirituality. Her personal experience of God drives her poetry. With honesty and vulnerability, she fleshes out the profound mystery of knowing at once both the beauty and terror of God's love, both freedom and obedience, deep joy and sorrow, both being deeply rooted in but also apart from the world, and lastly, both life and death. Her poems undulate through these paradoxes with much feeling and often leave me breathless, shaken. Allison Grayhurst's poems are both beautiful and difficult to behold,” *Anna Mark*, poet and teacher.

“Allison Grayhurst’s poetry has a tribal and timeless feeling, reminiscent of the Biblical commentary in Ecclesiastes,” *Cristina Deptula*, editor of *Synchronized Chaos*.

"Allison Grayhurst's poetry combines the depth and dark intensity of Sylvia Plath, the layered complex imagery of Dylan Thomas and the philosophical insights of Soren Kierkegaard, taking the reader on a fearless journey through the human condition, delving with honesty into death, grief, loss, faith, commitment, motherhood, and erotic love. Grayhurst intertwines a potent spirituality throughout her work so that each poem is not simply a statement or observation, but a revelation that demands the reader's personal involvement. Grayhurst's poetic genius is profound and evident. Her voice is uniquely authentic, undeniable in its dignified vulnerability as it is in its significance," Kyp Harness, singer/songwriter, author of *Wigford Rememberies*.



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